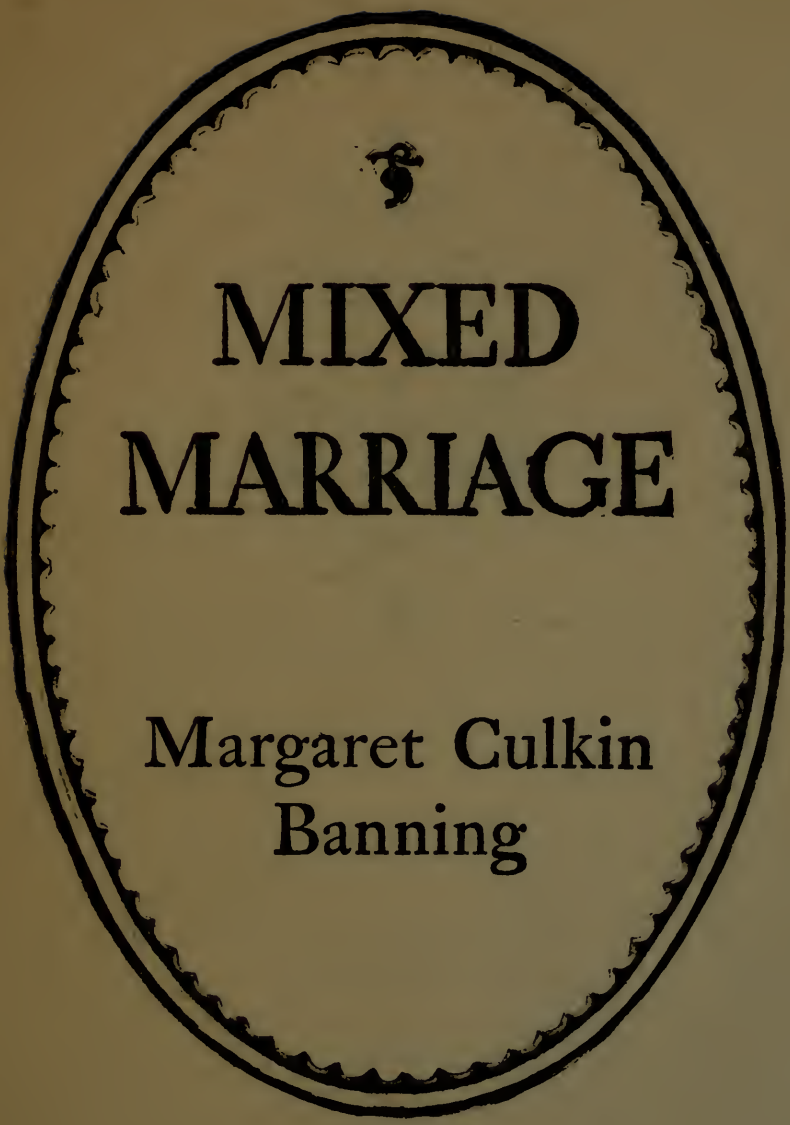

MIXED MARRIAGE

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MIXED

MARRIAGE

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BOOK ONE

Chapter One

IT WAS THE KIND OF country that women hated and men used. The memories that even the pioneers had of it were blended without beauty and with excitement and gamble giving them their best flavor. Men had not settled down there as they do in a fertile land, to cherish it and make it yield. From the first it had been a country to ravish. Fur, lumber, then iron. They had milled and cut and mined its treasures and with each exploitation it had become an uglier, more sullen country, covered by a thin growth of worthless timber or left exposed, where mines had been sought and found. There were occasional travelers who claimed to find the place picturesque and went away to describe open pit mines as gaping, red wounds in the earth, which expressed rather accurately what they did not resemble. But women felt no charm there. Perhaps that was because the country offered no concessions to them, more likely because it excited all the feelings that make men dangerous.

There was no peasant history. That was one of the curious things about it. The hundreds of Indian

and white trappers, the thousands of lumberjacks, the uncounted miners, had not been indigenous and had never grown localized. They had come there or been brought or sent because there was a rumor of money to be had, high wages for hard work and few strings attached. Only the men who were bringing them guessed how much money there really was to be made. Clerkly men, or studious men or men of quiet habit rarely came, so it was a mixture of raw personalities. Those first few hundred years of settlement by white men are riddled with stories of pirate, buccaneer temperaments, of men who had shed stained pasts, of those who liked life better salted with risks, of the greedy, of men with brains making maps and geological reports and knowing what was bound to happen. Eastern money came West and men who were authorities on the vintages of wines drank whisky raw and lived without comfort. They grew rich and carried other men along with them or shook them off callously into poverty and let them rot. During the lumber age the French missionary priest kept a kind of loose discipline over the camps which were planted along the logging railroads. He heard the rather monotonous confessions of the lumberjacks, who knew only a few sins but those very thoroughly, and tried to stem their excesses in the city, which swallowed up their wages at the end of the season. But no doubt

he understood their fevers of excitement better than they did and accepted their simple apologies to God.

More was expected of the country than of the men who pioneered in it. Later there would be time for order and the prim, thrifty spinning of morality. But there was still very little that a man could not get away with if he were clever enough, when Fred Hawley came West.

He called it West because it was the other side of Buffalo, but it was to northern Minnesota that he was going. It was a solution. It satisfied everyone who wanted Fred out of the way.

"If he will only stay there," doubted his sister-in-law, nervously.

"It will be the making of him," said his brother, "out there in that clean, healthy country, away from the city, away from liquor."

He had apparently no idea how much liquor Fred Hawley was heading for or how quickly he would discover it.

But for all that he lasted more than thirty years and made a fortune and satisfied his sister-in-law by never reappearing at one of her dinner parties. He never wanted to go back. They named a town after him before long. It was not much of a town, but he gave it a board schoolhouse and a church and it arranged for its own saloons. Hawley gave them more endowment than he did his own institutions. He was a notable figure all through that northern

country after a few years. Released from criticism and with no one caring whether he drank himself to death or not, he began to limit, or at least to space, his own debauches.

From the beginning he saw that the timber claims and holdings which his family had turned over to him in the bargain for his absence were either in process of exhaustion or already worthless. The pine had been cut from hundreds of the acres which were in his name, probably before the Hawleys ever bought it, and there was no possible redress. But Hawley could meet fraud with fraud and match one exploitation with another. He heard the rumor of ore before long. He even saw it, exposed in red holes left by the torn-out roots of trees blown down by the wind. Some of the Hawleys, and Fred was one, could think a dozen times while the ordinary man was thinking once. He had some little knowledge of finance and banking, for the family had tried him futilely in a bank in Philadelphia, and he had an academic knowledge of geology, a hang-over from a university education. He began to acquire and study old, inaccurate maps which showed regions of silver and copper in those parts and make noisy prophecies concerning the future when he was drunk. But there were some things he was never drunk enough to tell, some shrewdness which functioned even when he seemed incompetent.

He held on to his apparently worthless land and

even paid the taxes on it, with a growing conviction that he might have been swindled into wealth, if his guess about the ore was right. And he bought more land, which was the best gambling game that he knew how to play. The government, mistress of territory that still seemed limitless, and naïvely making gestures toward satisfying those who had claims against her generosity, had issued a dozen different kinds of scrip which had been laid on land in that region, and a great deal of it could be picked up for little or nothing if a man were alert enough. Hawley bought largely and cheaply, incredibly cheaply, but even then he was often short of cash and stripped the timber from his lands to buy more. He dealt with the Sioux and Chippewa Indians, to each of whom Congress had given rights to acquire a hundred and forty acres of public lands, any land that was open to settlement, whether surveyed or unsurveyed. Many of the great timber fortunes had been made by picking up this scrip from the Indians for a dollar an acre, two dollars an acre, or a jug of whisky. Congress wrote honest phrases into its statutes to prevent fraud, and half across the continent the lumber bandits cut the pine and let litigation follow, if it was worth the trouble to anyone. Usually it was not.

Hawley had come a little late to play the timber game in that section. He chose the scrip he wanted to acquire carefully and sometimes paid as high as thirty dollars an acre for his land, when he was

reasonably hopeful that it might cover a vein of ore. He found some of the soldiers' additional scrip, issued to war veterans, still floating, and took that over for a song. He became intimate with land agents and bought by private entry.

He was well equipped to become a power. As his name became known through the territory there were people in the cities at the head of the Lakes who heard of him, placed his genealogy, and would have made some effort to establish social relations with him if he had been amenable. Before the panic of 1893 there was a very definite attempt not to forget etiquette or backgrounds in the port cities, which looked out at their icy lake and dreamed grandly of a second New York or Boston. But Hawley ignored the city people. Their pretensions, their new native stone houses, their attempts at estates, their windmills, and their porcelain bathtubs with nickel-plated legs did not interest him. He had once had all that kind of thing and his taste for it was gone. What he liked now was the sting of cheap, raw whisky and the board floor of a saloon, the knowledge that he was a figure and had power. After ten years his sister-in-law would not have recognized the well-built, dissipated youth whose parting she had so heartily sped. He had grown a thick mustache, his face was red and coarsened with rough weather and rougher living, and he was forty

pounds heavier. He was still handsome and swaggered intolerably when he was drunk.

In 1884 iron ore was first mined in the "Triangle" north of Lake Superior. Fred Hawley was in on it, of course. But he was not through. There was still land in the ore district, unsurveyed. There were still a few pieces of Sioux half-breed scrip which for one reason or another had not been finally located or canceled. Hawley got his covetous hands on some of them and, at the same time, on one of the most exciting fights of his life. Rival claimants to the title of these lands appeared. They managed to get local rulings in their favor sustained at length by the Secretary of the Interior. But Hawley had money for lawyers by this time and he took it to the courts. The lawsuits grew to be the center of his life. He liked to scheme and plot with men of law. After thirteen years of battle for title he proved the land his own by an unbroken series of decisions in his favor.

He had become very rich in the meantime. The overlapping of the diminishing logging industry and the developing mining one made a strange hodgepodge of interest, through which Hawley found his way to profit because he knew the country, knew whom to cheat and whom to deal with fairly. In the offices of capitalists in the East Hawley was considered of importance and their representatives who were constantly on the ground consulted with him.

He helped them when it was to his advantage. Small interests and small holdings were absorbed into the big mining companies as quietly and cheaply as might be. Hawley made a better deal than a sale. With the more astute landowners he let the promoters mine his properties on a royalty basis, for he had already begun to think in terms of millions of tons of ore. He became a bigger man each year, and the little towns, widening around the mines, with shacks and stores and houses going up as they were needed, and the promise of big money thrilling the whole dreary, cold country, were his kingdom.

It was ten or twelve years after the first ore was mined, and while his richest holdings were still confused by litigation, that he married. He was forty-four and he had been sent into exile from Philadelphia when he was twenty-seven. The marriage was no doubt pure stubbornness on his part. There were dozen of girls quite as pretty as Alice O'Hare, but none possibly more resistant. He married her for the simple reason that, though she feared him, she feared hell still more and would have died a martyr rather than live with him in sin, which had undoubtedly been his plan and was his common procedure. But the priest upheld Alice and she upheld her faith, and together they saw that Fred Hawley, scion of a stock that had long held the Church of Rome at arms'-length, socially and morally, was married un-

der the injunction that he was embracing a sacrament for life and he signed a paper promising to bring his children up as Catholics. At his wedding he gave the priest a hundred dollars and made a most amazing joke in presenting it, which Alice, fortunately, did not hear or she might have run even then.

She never ran. What she learned and how it mixed with the clear orthodoxy of her mind is one of the curious secrets that are better kept secret. Hawley had long passed the point where such a marriage might be expected to have an effect on him. He was a very sophisticated person with no delicacy whatsoever. He had little respect for men and none at all for women. And into his arms came the pretty girl with blue eyes, who trusted in heaven and expected purgatory and believed in a flaming hell and could not have slept peacefully without her rosary under her pillow. There were two children who died before they breathed, perhaps because Alice was too bewildered to really want them to live. Then, when she seemed more fuddled and tired than ever, along came Marie, strong and well and normal, as if life would never tire of playing jokes on Alice Hawley. She lay in bed and was glad to rest and looked like a pathetic, fading Madonna and thought little, weary, sentimental thoughts about the miracle that the birth of his daughter might bring about in her husband. Up to that time she must have occa-

sionally felt that the difference between being married to Fred Hawley and living in sin with him was purely technical.

He had another woman by this time and nearly everyone knew it. She heard about the birth of the child and made some remark that Hawley did not like, so to prove it he knocked her down and she threw the first handy bottle at him. That was why he went home to his dreaming wife with a bandaged head. Prayers had apparently no effect on him. He had always managed to get by without discipline, and it was too late for him to submit to it. But he liked having the child. It gave him some reason to count up those millions of long tons of ore that would be mined, each one yielding him tribute. There was no use in counting for Alice. She was always worried by having more than twenty dollars in her purse at one time.

They had built a house and settled in Carmine, the largest of the ore towns. The builder who made the plans for the long bunk houses by the locations had put up the Hawley house, too. It was a frame house, for lumber was still ready to hand at a discount, but it was not as ugly as might have been expected. For Hawley, perhaps with the picture of certain gracious old houses haunting his mind, had set his foot down against cupolas and towers. But since he forgot about shutters and let the house be painted yellow it stood

out barrenly against a landscape which was already desolate enough.

Marie, whom her mother meant to call Mary, was baptized by a French priest and he entered the name in his records in the French fashion, so her mother never altered it. After a little, of course, it seemed to suit the child and belong to her.

She grew up with a knowledge of Catholic doctrine, a fair literacy garnered from the public schools, and a sense of social distinction. For the schools, by the time she was ready to go to them, were filling up with miners' children from the locations, who were never very clean and wore clothes that were sewed on them for the winter, and had a mature, undernourished look about their eyes and mouths. There were those children, and there were the children of the subordinate mining officials of the companies operating the mines, and the children of town tradesmen. And, somewhat apart, there were Marie and the sons and daughters of the superintendents. The sense of hierarchies, religious and social, was deep in Marie as far back as she was able to remember, and probably as a direct result most of her ideas were positive. Things were definite with her, unshaded. She believed. There was hardly a wavering idea in her mind, except the one which concerned her mother.

There was, of course, no family reserve. Marie

knew that her father could buy and sell the town and that he was apt to come up the street roaring with drunkenness. But she always felt that his drunkenness was not like other men's and that he had a right to it.

"Pray for your father, Marie," Mrs. Hawley would say. "I always feel that perhaps if we keep on praying we will be rewarded. Offer up a novena for him, dear."

And for nine consecutive days Marie would go into the poor little white church on the corner of the street which bred saloons farther down its length, and kneel before the statue of Our Lady of Victory with the crown on her head and the world at her feet and the sweet, sad face that even painted plaster had not made absurd, and she would pray six prayers and end with a personal one of her own. She liked the empty church that no street noise could make anything but sanctuary. It was not the emotionalism of a child. Fifteen years later Marie would go into the aged cathedrals in Europe, from whose mighty walls incense had never quite escaped, and feel just the same way. The Church had had her from her birth until she was seven, and there are churchmen who have wisely said that is long enough to complete possession.

For when at the end of the nine days, with the novena completed without a break in its offering, Fred Hawley would go on an exceptional debauch

and not show up at home for a week and his wife would fret helplessly, Marie never doubted the efficacy of prayer because of her failure.

"Say a rosary for your poor father," said Mrs. Hawley.

Marie would say the rosary. But the thing she could not get straight in her mind was this. If her father sobered up before he came home, as he sometimes did when he remembered his daughter, and came up the street not roaring, but with the occupied air of a man who has been away on a business trip, her mother's whole manner would change.

"There's your father, Marie. He'll be here for dinner. You run over to the butcher's and get a thick steak, four pounds, and tell Helga your father's coming. Look at Peter Helmer talking to your father. Would you think he'd have the nerve?"

The thing that puzzled Marie was that with her father's reappearance the slate was washed clean. It was not fear in her mother's voice as she watched her husband talking to Peter Helmer. It was admiration of her husband. It was a flutter at being married to such a man. It was complete gratefulness that he had come home sober and sullen instead of wild drunk. Alice knew that she would never know where he had been unless he took a savage pleasure in telling her. She vastly preferred not to know. She knew her own duties, she was a wedded wife, and she certainly had none of the intellectual worries

about sex that have come to beset a later generation. It would never have occurred to her to leave her husband because he was continually unfaithful to her. That was the man of it, and men were different from women, with strange, unbridled passions. Perhaps her sensibilities had become a little blunted after years of personal outrage and none too delicate jokes. Perhaps in a completely negative way she took an obscure pride in what she considered virility.

Chapter Two

IT IS POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, that Marie was less imaginative than many children. Certainly it is true that, looking back at her childhood years later, when it became a psychological fashion to hunt out the early incidents that had focused or deflected one's life, Marie was at a loss. She remembered things in plenty, but she could not remember how they had affected her. It was as if she had not brought a continuous personality along with her, as if it had stopped every now and then and started again.

She could remember her father's death but not how she had felt about it. There was no deathbed scene of the sort her mother must have hoped for, with a soul softened and awed and very respectful on its entrance into eternity. Hawley had a stroke and gasped his life away in heavy, raucous breaths that could be heard all over the house. Marie always remembered that noise. He never regained consciousness and his wife could only hope that while his dissipated body was panting and gasping, his soul was off somewhere, making its terms and settlement

with God. After a little she came to believe that. It was so much easier to believe what she chose, after Fred Hawley died, without him around to drive in reality. She forgot his dissipations, forgot his jokes, and modeled his memory to her own liking.

Of course she married again. She was still pretty in a faded, mature way, and a measure of confidence came to her as a widow, especially after the magnificence of Fred Hawley's funeral, which brought people from miles around to pay tribute to his tractable corpse. He had been, everyone saw quickly in retrospect, one of the great men who had measured the future of the country and its potential power. A few editorials said that he had given his life to build it up. Perhaps he had, but he certainly had been well paid for it. His probated will gave no idea of the extent of the estate.

"I believe she's the richest girl in the state," said her lawyer of Marie and in her hearing. "You ought to send her to some fine school, Mrs. Hawley. She needs more than she can get here in the high school."

"She's all I have," said Mrs. Hawley.

"Did you hear any more from your husband's people?"

"Only that letter I showed you. I guess they're after the money now."

"He wasn't very friendly with his family, was he?"

"He was cut off from them root and branch," answered Mrs. Hawley, who had an Irish love for a phrase.

"Well, between you and me, Mrs. Hawley, I'd let them stay cut off."

She nodded.

"But about this fine girl of yours—and her education. If there's any way I can help you I'd like to do it."

Martin Jeffrey was a clever lawyer. He arranged everything admirably. He found a school for Marie that satisfied even her mother, and after she was safely in it he married the widow. It was a master stroke for Jeffrey. It solidified his political power which had been built on wits before. Now he was connected with one of the greatest single fortunes the mines had made. His position was based on the ore itself, his interest tied up in it. And it was beginning to be obvious that politics in that country could only be safely handled by men whose interests in its yield were personal and therefore fundamental. There was a weight of ore still to be dug out after twenty-eight years, and to dig it out a mass of men was necessary. That meant growing villages and towns in which a formal democratic government must be established and thoroughly controlled. Men were not so docile as they used to be. There was need for politicians. A restless state legislature was already listening to exciting speeches about the vast wealth of

iron holdings which was being yielded for people out of the state. The battle of taxation was being fought in every session. Jeffrey had his own ideas about how it had to be played. The great interests had been a little wary of him up to now. He had been seen in strange company. He had been for sale. But now he was allied with the Hawley interests and far more easy to handle than Fred Hawley had ever been. Hawley had always enjoyed playing it alone so that he would not have to share any victory.

The year after Jeffrey married Mrs. Hawley was the first year his brother-in-law, Tom Collins, went to the legislature. He was handpicked for the job and his election was guaranteed before he filed by the simple method of buying off one opponent and ruining another. Collins was poor enough to respect money, smart enough to lie his way out of anything, and so utterly without moral balance that he never even tried to distinguish between right and wrong, decency and indecency. He simply tried to gain his end by any method. Added to those basic qualities of fitness he had the build of a statesman and the fine, resonant voice of an orator. He could take orders and deal them out as inspirations to the legislature and there were always some credulous enough to be captivated by his rounded periods. He was a valuable man and he knew that he would last just so long as he could prove his value. There was neither gratitude nor loyalty in the cold terms on

which he was employed. The terms were never written. They were not even verbal. But Collins knew who sent him to the legislature. So did everybody else.

There was war in Europe. More than a hundred mines in Northern Minnesota were supplying iron for steel to be made into materials for the Entente of the West. Working in the mines were some Europeans who knew better than their employers what the war was about and why it had come, who had a knowledge of old boundaries established by conquest and held by fear. But no one asked them what they knew or cared what they knew. People as a rule were reading about the atrocities in Belgium and skipping the intensive geography of battle-fronts.

There was war in the Minnesota legislature about taxes on iron ore. Money was being made in steel, and the farmers in the southern part of the state, as well as the politicians of the north, wanted a share of it. But the slim, adolescent girl in the convent school did not know what it was all about. No one who had her in charge dreamed that the richest girl in the Northwest needed to know anything about economics. They taught her gentle subjects, chosen to beguile and enrich life while it was struggling toward eternity. They taught her that money was only a blessing of the world and that spiritual fortunes ranked higher with God. But for all that, Marie

found out that the knowledge that she was rich did her no harm among the girls.

She was not the only rich girl in the school, of course. There was Nellie Muldeen from New York, whose father had given the chapel and bought the Stations of the Cross for it from Rome. There was Dorothea Lesure from Albany, where Marie visited one Easter holiday when there was not time to go home. The Lesures had a chapel in their own house built for the old, pious grandmother who could not go out any more. They had great bathrooms made out of old rooms, with marble basins and white panels of wood that had cracked a long time ago. Dorothea Lesure had a sister who went out a great deal with young men and she gave Marie her first knowledge of what could be done to improve upon nature. Marie had a feeling, even at seventeen, that the elder Lesure girl did not have so much to work with as she did herself.

But when she came back after that holiday to the convent she went into what was almost an ecstasy of reaction. Vanity was sin and hideous. She washed with the coarsest soap she could find and spent as much time in the chapel as the nuns, who had seen many girls in such moods, would allow. She made up her mind to "enter" and visioned herself in the convent habit, with its stiff ruff and indefinite black alpaca skirts. She was romantic and absurd and pic-

torially pious, and then suddenly, quite as the nuns had known would happen, the mood broke.

That was the summer when she spent a month at the Muldeen place in Westchester and learned other things. Mr. Muldeen knew all about Marie's mining interests. He knew some of the people who had the rest of the big properties there. His own wealth came from manufacturing industries, but when fortunes grow big enough they recognize each other. Joe Muldeen, smoking a fifty-cent cigar, looked at his daughter and Marie Hawley and puzzled. They were not alike. Nellie, with that broad Irish brow and generous mouth and look of being well equipped and yet not quite sure of herself, was exactly what he might expect of his daughter. But in the face of this other convent girl, in the way she never stuck up her chin or looked repressed or superior but seemed none the less to be aristocratic, he felt something else. It was the same quality that he sometimes found in men whom he met in the city and that was apt to bring out a noisy excessiveness in his own manner.

"She's not an Irish girl, is she, Nellie?"

"Her mother was Irish. Her father was a Protestant. He's dead and her mother married somebody else. She had a mass said for her father last week."

"I thought there was a break somewhere," said Muldeen, shrewdly, "but she looks to be a nice girl, Nellie. Give her a good time."

It was a good time. A brilliant summer, decorated rather than depressed by the war. An unusual summer, for the war was letting down many bars and through that rich countryside where the Muldeens lived every effort was being made to pile up sums for charities. The girls went to benefits on the large estates and gave lavish amounts for every cause presented to them. A thousand quixotisms were being loosed every day through the press, by circulars. The sorrow of war seemed unbearable to the girls, but it was really their aching nerves which could hardly bear the excitement. The city was full of soldiers who might soon be dead, baptized by blood. Airplanes whirred over the country. Spies might lurk anywhere discovering fantastic things. The girls thought with horrified and angry curiosity of what the Germans were said to have done to Belgian nuns.

"I think I shall give everything I own to equip ambulances and hospitals," Marie wrote home to her mother. "I wish I could be a nurse and get abroad somehow. So does Nellie."

Her mother must have shown the letter to Martin Jeffrey, for it was he who wrote back that he understood and commended her generosity, but that her fortune could not readily be liquidated for such donations. He had, however, placed an additional sum at her disposal, for charitable purposes. Mr.

Muldeen heard about that request and answer and smiled.

"Most of our fortunes are like that," he remarked, eating the end of his expensive cigar.

The war was not doing his plant any harm, either. Cotton cloth was in demand for hundreds of uses. But still he wanted the thing to end. He had a son in service down at Camp Upton, waiting to be sent overseas. The Muldeens kept a vigil light burning constantly for him and had a daily mass said for their intention, which was his safety. But still they worried. Jeronimous, when he came home for a few days' leave, was not worried. He was afraid the war would stop before he got in it and he was very impatient of the way the government was holding him up.

He was a boy of twenty, full of jokes and energy and several kinds of stories. Nellie had been full of romantic hopes that he and Marie would fall in love. But they did not. Marie was interested in older men, and Jeronimous wanted girls to be livelier, especially since he was not going to see much more of them. He went to see a girl on 167th Street and somewhere in a row of uninteresting houses struck the spark of liveliness that he desired.

The two girls talked a great deal, but what they said was not important. Marie was not yet a person, but only a reflection. She mirrored obvious phrases and claptrap patriotism and devout religion. When

she and Nellie went into New York and had tea at the Plaza, watching women and officers and wondering who people were, they attracted little attention because they showed so obviously what they were, a couple of virtuous rich girls, with no invitation in their eyes and no experience in their faces. Sometimes people did turn to look twice at the girl with the gray eyes, but the second glance usually disappointed them.

Chapter Three

IT WAS A MAN WHO MADE Marie Hawley a personality. He should, according to all the rules, have done it by loving her. But he did not even admire her and she saw him only twice. The first time she had rather mawkishly fancied herself in love with him, and the more she thought about it the more she imagined, quite in her mother's earlier romantic fashion, that he was secretly admiring her. She got herself up for the second occasion on which she was to see him as expensively and attractively as she knew how. Pink finger nails and a champagne-colored ensemble that had come, they guaranteed, from France. Perfume on her ears.

Some one, on being pressed later, told her what the man had said of her. There had been one of those small plots, in which she herself was prime mover, to find out what he thought about her.

"That girl?" asked the man. "She makes me think of an ice-cream soda."

It was one of his staler phrases, but Marie did not know that. He was a literary celebrity, making his way by being crude and ruthless and occasionally

stumbling upon accuracy. He made no secret of his preference for a European scene and he acknowledged a connoisseur's taste in liquor. The comparison left no room for doubt. It gave Marie a negative standard that she never forgot.

That year she went to Paris, not as she had gone on that post-convent trip with Nellie Muldeen and her mother, spending money largely in all the advertised places and exclaiming over unfamiliar things. She went alone.

There was no reason why she could not go anywhere in the world she wanted. The open ore cars still filed slowly across northern Minnesota and they would, for her lifetime. The war was over, only pity and regret and bitterness now. Marie had grown out of schooling and had no desire for further academic learning. The world sprawled around her but she was really not very curious about it. It was herself that she was interested in and, for the moment, ashamed of.

Her stepfather rather encouraged her going.

"Just as well," he said to his wife. "If she stays around here she'll be marrying the first Tom, Dick, or Harry who comes along. How old is she now? Twenty? Twenty-one, you say?"

He was rather disturbed by the fact that Marie, after years of being adequately provided for at a distance, was back again as a personal problem. He knew her better as a name on paper, a signature to

documents, an alliance to conjure with, than as an individual. He suspected that, like her mother, she was stupid and must be safely married before long. But that was something he preferred not to happen just yet. Not until some other things worked out. Another man in the immediate family just now would complicate interests.

"Just suppose she married over in Europe," said his wife.

"You ought to warn her against that," answered Jeffrey, sharply, "unless you want a rotten foreigner for a son-in-law and a flock of idiot grandchildren." There was something in Alice Hawley Jeffrey's passivity that made men brutal. "You want to tell her that there'll be a lot of men after her money. She has to watch her step. I'll talk to her myself."

Marie was at home. In spite of her loneliness for the convent, in spite of her lack of adjustment to her mother's house and her stepfather, she felt that Carmine was home. The town, named not very accurately from the color of the surrounding ore-pits, was unfamiliar because it showed signs of prosperity. The country had not changed, in contour or appearance, as greatly as the civilization laid flat against it. A few forest fires had washed over the outskirts and left the stalks of tamarack and bent, grotesque, unfallen pines. But it took more than a few hundred miles of concrete roads running like criss-cross ribbons to and from the water-ports to

change a scene as barren and flat and resistant as that one had always been. In the winter the snow made it desolate for miles. The cold still fought hard against humanity, though less successfully, for people were better equipped to fight back every year. But below zero weather reaches out like torrid heats, for primitive instincts, and the country still had weeks of triumph.

It could never be tamed or peaceful land. It would frown forever on its exploiters and yield to them only sullenly. It was no longer an outpost, no longer pioneer territory. It was full of complicated desires and had been touched like the rest of the world with the neurotic dissatisfactions of accomplishment. All day long automobiles sped down the highways between the range cities, and trains rattled at the sides of the motor roads. Between them they carried a little of everything, from political power to social ambition, along with the people transferred from place to place.

The saloons, background for Marie's early life, were gone. Instead, Finns made liquor in semi-secret and occasionally went to jail for it. Curtained cars brought safer supplies from Canada. No one went thirsty or was temperate against his wish. It was only a difference of emphasis. When Jeffrey drank, he preferred to do it at home. Alice's first husband had preferred the saloon.

The hierarchy was still there, jumbled a little now

in its alliances with the mines. Marie did what she could to take her place when she first came back, but she was not quite sure where it was. There was, for example, young Mrs. Hale to make things difficult as she tried to make them pleasant and friendly. Mrs. Hale did things well, even in Carmine. She had Marie to tea when she came back from the convent and from the Muldeen trip to Europe.

The tea was excellent. There was very little food and impersonal, detached, light talk. Deborah Hale had come from a great St. Anthony family and had been easily and well and rather completely educated. Europe was to her, Marie discovered, a place where one went for certain things, and not a large map to be traversed. Deborah traveled, as she read books, quite as a matter of course. She lived in a square, ugly house which she had made charming and not at all affected. She pretended to be nothing but what she was, but that was a great deal. The wisest ambassador that had ever gone to a certain foreign country from the United States had been her maternal grandfather. Her people had lived, consequently, enjoyably, benevolently, for generations. She was in Carmine because she adored her husband and he was there because he was getting a first-hand knowledge of some of his inherited holdings. The Hales had traditions about such things. The sons and nephews technically went on their own after Yale finished with them.

There were books in the room that had just been read. There were flowers that had not been bought for the occasion. Deborah Hale was unembarrassedly pregnant and very pretty in spite of it. It was a live room. Marie, looking like a somewhat repressed angel, felt stiff and clumsy and unsure.

"You were born in this town, weren't you?" asked Deborah.

"Yes."

"My child will be, too. I'm glad of it. It's romantic in its unapproachable way. Don't you think so?"

"It's awfully cold in winter," said Marie, and then, reaching an impasse, said that she hadn't been home in winter for years.

"But you're going to stay here now?"

Marie said she didn't know.

"It's not so bad," Deborah remarked. "There are half a dozen people who can play bridge. You play, don't you?"

"Not very well. Not with experts. I'm not very good at it."

"Well, there's more than the bridge. We're not so far from the cities. But this place itself is full of color. We had a thrilling election here last time. It was Finn eat Finn. Only it really wasn't," added Deborah, sobering. "Do you take any interest in politics?"

Marie said she never had.

"I should think that you would," said Deborah, looking at her curiously. She could not tell that under that calm appearance and the overmatched dress and the expensive, fashionable shoes that people who dressed well weren't buying, was a feeling of helpless awkwardness and inferiority. And that under that, deeper, basic, a consciousness of virtue and religion and separation from this young woman who so obviously managed her own life.

The Hales had three other children and Deborah was still well under thirty. Marie had heard that fact spoken of more than once. This afternoon Deborah herself mentioned it after her children had come in for a moment and gone out again. They were handsome little boys, lean and brown-skinned, the eldest not more than seven and the youngest still a trifle unsteady as he walked. They wore khaki suits and had bare, scarred legs.

"My mother," said Deborah, smiling, "warns me that I'm never going to be able to crowd another child into this house. But I tell her that she doesn't know how we manage up here in the mining country. I and the 'foreign element.' Always room for another."

"It must be fun," answered Marie, with a curious wonder as to how it really did feel.

"It is. I adore having children. Why shouldn't we have big families, those of us who are reasonably

sure of the kind of stock we come from? What better thing can we do?"

Marie had a glimpse of a generous, brave ideal. But she knew that the premise of the talk was wrong. It left God out, just as she had been warned a hundred times such women would do. Intellectual women, women of that kind of social position. She felt more awkward than ever.

She rose to go, her black satin coat held around her in the mannequin fashion, wishing that she could look in her clothes the way Deborah Hale looked in that green crêpe, in spite of her pregnancy. She held out a white hand with shining finger tips, and Deborah took it in her own firm brown one, on which several of the nails were broken and clipped close. But Marie knew and felt that Deborah was superior, was above her, somehow. It was her mother shrinking in her, and generations of servant Irish before that. She completely missed the puzzled admiration in Mrs. Hale's eyes. What Mrs. Hale saw was that lovely chin, poised in the way Hawley chins had been poised for generations.

"My brother is coming up here next month," said Deborah. "I'd like to have him meet you."

Marie thanked her and went away. She wished, as she went down the walk, that she had not worn those stockings with the embroidered triple points in the back, even if they were the latest thing in Paris, as they had told her in Chicago where she had

bought them. When she went into her mother's house, which Alice had furnished three times since the death of her husband, once in mission style, once in Colonial reproductions and this time in Italian imitations, each time at the dictate of a decorator who was looking for easy money, she decided that something had to be done. Not with the house immediately. With herself first of all.

So when Lewis Sanford came to Carmine Marie was not there. She had gone to Europe alone, leaving a solemn promise with her mother that she would not secretly marry a foreigner. She could have gone with the Calhouns from Superior, who were close friends of Mr. Jeffrey's. But Marie had shown unexpected opposition to that. She had even changed her sailing when she discovered what boat the Calhouns were taking.

In New York she saw Nellie Muldeen Floyd, who had recently married into Tammany circles and still more wealth and was in a terrific flurry over a new and luxurious apartment and her coming child. In four months of marriage Nellie had grown very plump with affection and indulgence, and was fascinated and appalled by her own condition.

"A girl has no idea," she said over and over again to Marie, "and it's so soon! But what are you going to do? That's the way men are and that's the way women are. But I'm not going to have a dozen right off. I'll tell you that!"

There were times when she spoke with a certain hostility of her husband, as if a struggle were natural and inevitable between them. But when Mr. Floyd, a handsome, middle-aged man with a hearty manner, was around, Nellie was docile and happy under her petulance. Marie bought extravagantly lovely presents for the coming child, pillows of batiste, edged with soft, real lace, dresses so fine that she could have folded them in the palm of her hand. She gave Nellie a white satin negligée and a silver medal which she took to the church and had blessed. But to Nellie's amazement she bought not a thing for herself or for the trip on the boat.

"I've that coat I bought last year," she said when Nellie spoke about it, "the one with the sable."

"Is that model still good?" asked Nellie.

Marie did not think it was. But she was beginning to find out some things. She was scenting at least the direction of the things she wanted.

On the boat no one noticed her very much at first. She lay back in her steamer chair and tried to sort out people. It was quite hard work. She was not as stupid as her stepfather suspected, but the nuns had discovered that it was easier to tell Marie Hawley something than to leave her to work it out for herself. She rarely forgot, but her mind was not creative. It was not creating now. It was discarding.

She wore the coat trimmed with sable constantly until it created a temporary personality for her.

People began to ask who the girl in that coat was. It didn't mean anything to them when they found out, but some of them remembered her face, a pretty Irish face with gray eyes and a serenity that indicated stability of line somewhere.

She spent only a few days in London and then went on to Paris to lay the ghost of the ice-cream soda. That was far from easy, for she struggled with two drawbacks, her own lack of focus and the enjoyment she really got from show-window effects which beckoned to a ready public. But she was determined to create an effect which should not be dependent on what she wore. That had been the lesson learned from Deborah Hale and some of the people on the boat.

She paid her way into the presence of the most adroit of hair-dressers and then surprised him by showing unexpected resistance to what he wanted to do to her hair.

"No," said Marie.

"It is the very latest fashion," he argued. "You will see." And he showed her a drawing which he himself had signed.

Marie hardly glanced at it. She was looking at herself in the glass and she spoke swiftly in French. Her French had the perfection insisted on in the convent. It was not academic. She could think in it.

"I want," she said, "to have you tell me how I should arrange my hair. Not for the moment only.

The fashion does not interest me. It is I, myself, in whom I am interested."

He was a very clever man who had grown matter-of-fact with rich Americans who dressed so obviously as this one. He saved his inspirations for the really great and let Americans cross his palm for the use of his reputation. But there was something in the easy, liquid French, in the intense concentration of Marie's attitude, or possibly an appreciation of the beautiful white texture of her neck, that brought him to attention.

"It is not good now," he said, shortly.

"That is why I have come to you," answered Marie, with a touch of her father's irony.

He stared at her critically, but she did not even flush. They were both dead in earnest.

"You need not try to be fashionable," he said. "You are serious. Yet not the intellectual." He took her hair and tried it one way and then another. "Not too much Madonna. But you will look as if you do not tell everything. It will take time. And no more of the haircuts. Your hair it must learn."

She hated it for weeks and yearned for a crisp turn of the marcel iron which she was forbidden. But she could accept discipline and gradually she saw that she had bullied him into giving her the right advice. Her face seemed entirely different, its charm not common now, but single, fair with its own beauty.

It was many years before Marie was again as lonely

as she was that winter. She looked back into the orderly, full convent days with actual hunger. Even Carmine with its rough, scarred hills felt at this distance like a cordial home. In Paris it rained and rained and rained and sometimes she could hardly remember why she was there or why she stayed. Day after day had to be constructed out of minor incidents. A few people in the hotel where she stayed were temporary companions for dinner or the theater. Some school friends looked her up one week and she caught the echo of the Paris the Muldeens had recorded in albums of picture postals. But for the most part she was alone, in shops, in the hotel, in churches, searching for something she wanted to be, sloughing off something else.

She bought clothes slowly. Not models this time, not things plucked covetously from the backs of the mannequins, because they were pretty or because she had always liked blue. The clothes she was buying now were being made for her, and sometimes she thought they were hideous. A pin here, a pin there and the fitting, one of a dozen, was over. It was tiresome. It was endless. It was vanity. But she persisted.

On one March evening she first felt confidence. She was coming back to her hotel as she had come on so many nights. The rain had stopped and the world was a moist, suffused gray. The pavements glistened, taxis slid along, honking noisily. A man looked at Marie once, twice, back with interested admiration.

Two American women stared greedily. She felt herself suddenly, in that Paris twilight, a person. She saw some violets near the Madeleine and stopped to buy them, not because it was picturesque but because she wanted them. She passed a dozen shop windows without a tinge of curiosity or diffused desire. The city had become her Paris. She could find her way in it because she had a way.

When she reached her room she did not even look in the mirror. The man's eyes had told her enough. Besides, she was learning to avoid that nervous habit of mirrors. She sat down in a gilt armchair by the window of her expensive, pleasant room, thinking lightly. She knew that never again would anyone call her an ice-cream soda. She knew that she could at last forget that vague horror of becoming the kind of woman Nellie Muldeen was since she had been married. That would not happen. There were things to learn but ways to learn them. She thought of how pretty the misty city was and how much better it was to have hats made on your head and that she had not kept Lent as well as she should have done. Little things to be straightened out, an immortality to be held in view. The gray-eyed girl with the beautiful face, about whom a man was still thinking with disappointment to which he had no right, let her thoughts drop one by one into the dusk. She had no idea that she was being discussed downstairs by a couple of people who had not even seen her.

For Mrs. Allen Hawley of Philadelphia, on discovering that a Marie Hawley from Minnesota was registered in the same hotel, had revived an ancient worry.

"Of course it must be the same."

Her husband, like a disturbed old eagle, nodded.

"Well, we'll have to look her up."

"But what's she doing staying alone at a Paris hotel?"

They didn't like it. They feared it. But Allen Hawley made some excuses.

"They do, nowadays. Bee Bracebridge always does."

"She can," said his wife, curtly; "it's a different matter."

"Well ——"

"We could go somewhere else ourselves," she suggested.

"Oh, no, no, no! Certainly not. If she's really Fred's daughter, that's all there's to it. She may be quite all right. And Fred died rich."

"That's why she's over here. Spending it. Well, I suppose we should be glad he's not with her. Anyway, I shall have her pointed out to me, Allen, before I make any advances. You know that I'm here for a rest and my neuritis is quite bad enough."

So they pointed Marie out to her, grave-eyed, composed, slim, with a fresh gardenia pinned to the lapel of a black trotteur that spoke for itself. Mrs.

Allen Hawley's pale eyes brightened with satisfaction and her neuritis, which had been threatening all night, seemed better. She wrote Marie a note, cautiously worded, for after all one couldn't go by looks. But still it was encouraging.

Marie dined with them that night. She let them lead the way and smooth over the gap of more than thirty years' break in the family relations. She was acquiescent and beautiful and Allen Hawley liked his brother better than he ever had.

"Fred loved that Western country," said Allen, affably. "He used to say to me that it was the only place for a man to live. He couldn't rest until he got out there. He was quite a figure, wasn't he?"

Strangely enough, at that moment in the gleam of the Parisian restaurant, between these two black-clad, deliberately aristocratic old people, Marie had a vivid picture of her father. Wild drunk, coming up the streets of Carmine—blind drunk. Powerful, feared, dangerous.

"Yes," she said, "he was well known. Everyone knew him."

"You're here alone?" asked Mrs. Hawley.

"Quite alone," answered Marie with composure.

"You must let us introduce you to some people. We have some pleasant friends in Paris. Grace and I have been going back and forth now for many years. Now let me see. I think this duckling is what we want. Grace?"

His wife nodded, but Marie shook her head.

"I won't have any, thank you."

"No duck? The lamb then? The breast of chicken? But I assure you they do know how to cook duckling here."

"I'll just have vegetables," said Marie.

"Don't you eat meat?"

"Not on Friday."

"Ah," the waiter, bending close, came in with sympathy, "there is lobster Thermidor for mademoiselle, perhaps?"

Marie answered him in fluent French. That gave the Hawleys time to catch up. Mrs. Hawley had no prejudice against Catholics. She knew some very fine ones who had been socially admitted. In Paris, too, it was quite the old tradition. But she didn't like to find them in the family like this. And Allen Hawley, as he revised the order, wondered if possibly it was the Catholic Church that was getting its hands on that pile of money Fred had made. The mother must have been a Catholic. But had Fred gone over? Had they got him, too?

It was a flaw, but not as serious as it might have been.

"She's very attractive," was Mrs. Hawley's final verdict, "and it will be interesting to introduce her about a little. As far as I can see she knows nobody. But she handles herself very well. And her

French—that's the convent, I suppose—is delightful. It gives her an air."

"She's got no end of air," agreed her uncle. "She looks a Hawley. We want to see something of her. She'll do us credit, that girl."

The Hawleys had a synthetic Paris of their own. They knew people. Philadelphia and New York Americans who had married abroad and who sighed when the Hawleys telephoned that they were in Paris but would not ignore them. It was to everyone's pleasure and advantage to feature Marie to some extent, relieving the dead weight of the old couple and giving them new social impetus. She did very well. Her clothes and her manner were successful. She was docile and yet not *ingénue*. The word of her passed around the little group that the Hawleys knew and she was included in their dinner invitations. The proud, fussy old lady and the dogmatic old man appropriated her. They had their own limousine with them and did things well, but it was not their luxury that impressed Marie. She had seen that at the Muldeens'. This was different. She felt that these people had always had private conveyances, coaches, carriages, limousines, as the generations might direct. This was the sort of thing that had trained Deborah Hale to unconscious ease. Marie did not feel quite related to it now and she was not clever enough to see that it was because she was

not entirely related that there was savor in her appearance.

At the dinners there would be old men, younger ones, some married, some who were not, looking at her neck, talking about America. She let them talk. But when they eyed her too closely she felt queer. There was sin in their thoughts. She knew it. She did not entirely object. She knew she would have to meet sin and the flesh sooner or later. She knew, too, that there had to be battle with them. That was her schooling. In the thought of battle there was excitement in a fancy of defeat—not permanent, but possible—more pleasure than in the imagination victory. But she knew about the indulgence of thought, too, and that it could become sin. The nuns had been wise and thorough.

Anything might have happened, would have happened. But there was no time. For crashing into this quickly built-up world and tearing it to pieces came her mother's letter. Her mother wrote on correspondence cards with a thick gilded edge and a grapevine initial stamped in green on the side. On those flippant cards her news seemed all the more terrible because they were so like Alice, so completely her taste.

Alice Hawley Jeffrey was sick. She was sick with the immemorial disease of women, their dread and incurable horror. She was reluctant to write her daughter and spoil her trip. She apologized.

"But," she wrote, "I felt that you ought to know. They say they must operate. I don't know. I've always had such a horror of the knife. I am afraid that if I go to bed I will never get up again. I wish the ocean did not divide us now. It is too bad to bother you. I pray constantly that the Lord's will and not mine be done. I think that if it were not for my horror of the knife that I would not mind so much. Say a rosary for me, Marie dear, and perhaps you will offer up your Easter communion for my recovery or happy death."

Her happy death! As if death could ever be happy to poor Alice Hawley, who feared it so desperately, feared it not as conclusion, but as a venture into another world which might be just as unkind as the first one had been. Her terror written in those curly sentences on the fancy card crossed the ocean and struck deep into her daughter.

"My mother is very ill," she told the Hawleys. "I must go home at once. The first boat."

The uncle and aunt were full of sympathy. But none the less, when the girl's passage was engaged and they were alone they could not prevent certain anticipations of adjustment. With the mother gone, if she did go, and there was slight chance of anything else if that disease had her trapped, Marie was a remarkably free young woman. A charming girl, and very rich.

While they planned for her she was on her knees

in the nearest church, shadows lurking around her, the ghosts of a thousand griefs her companions. She was full of penitence for vanity, for worldliness. Death, corruption, and the slow release from sin—these things she had been forgetting. Her mother's soul might even now be on its lingering way to God. God was very close in the strange church, admonishing her, disappointed in her. She hardly prayed. She feared and was suppliant, begging for her mother.

She would say a novena, a rosary morning and evening each day. By that time she would be almost home.

BOOK TWO

Chapter Four

"DON'T LET IT GET CONTROL of you," said Deborah Hale to her brother.

"Suppose it has already?"

"Then I'm afraid you're out of luck."

"No," said Sanford, "I can't see that. Why?"

She tapped another cigarette and made no answer. They were in her mother's city drawing-room and above Deborah, on the delicate ivory wall, hung a painting, a portrait of herself before she was married. The handsome girl in the picture looked brave and ready and undenied, and if there was arrogance in her face there was also generosity.

"I want you to be frank," he urged.

"Probably you don't. Nobody ever really wants that."

He compared her with the picture.

"You're a good deal more of a person than you were when that looked exactly like you. Marriage hasn't hurt you."

"Oh, it's hurt, all right," said Deborah, and added, "Four children."

"You're not sorry."

"I'm glad. But don't you ever think it's because it hasn't hurt. It's driven and bedeviled me. It's whipped me into line. I'm not sorry because by the greatest luck in the world I've stayed in love. I don't mind the closeness. But it is so terribly close!"

She stopped and then finished, "If it amounts to anything at all."

"Well," asked Lewis, "if you can get away with it, why can't I?"

"Maybe you can."

"But you don't think so."

"I think you're taking on a harder job than I did," said Deborah.

He turned, his voice a little strained, almost shy.

"I'm willing to take it on. Whatever the thing is, it has got me. Not for a day or a night. I might as well surrender. It's that or life doesn't mean a thing."

"My fault," she murmured. "I shouldn't have shown her to you."

"Fault nothing."

"Are you sure it isn't her looks?"

"She's not as beautiful as Sally Selvig."

"No—I suppose not."

"I didn't want to marry Sally Selvig, did I? No, it's not Marie's looks, though I'd rather look at her once than any other woman a hundred times."

"But when you get right down to it, Lewis, she isn't your kind of person."

"Maybe that's why I want her."

"You're mental. I know you're vigorous, too, and all that. But primarily you're mental. All your deepest contact with living, even in sports and things like that, is with your mind. You're an engineer technically, but you handle your work through your brain. That's why this political row up north got under your skin so."

"It got under my skin because it was such damned bad management," said Lewis, shortly, "and everybody works with his brain. So that's neither here nor there."

"Tim says it is. He says that if you marry Marie the complication of all that situation will be increased. That you won't be able to keep out of a lot of unpleasantness. That you can't stand what you'll run up against. That in a way you'll be on both sides of the fence."

"I'm not worried."

Deborah looked at him. Within that well-hewn body there was an intelligence like her own, hotfoot after truth. She knew. She knew the risks it could run.

"And she's a Catholic," she said, suddenly, almost irrelevantly.

But evidently it was in his mind, too.

"Of course," he said, "that's really what's bothering you. We're still bigots at heart."

"You know better."

"Well, then, here it is. I'm glad she's a Catholic."

"Glad?"

"Isn't it time we bred a little belief into this family?"

"I don't know what you're talking about now."

"I like Marie's faith. I only wish I had it."

"You don't mean that you're considering ——"

"No. But I'm glad that I'm in love with a woman who believes in God and heaven and hell. Who isn't trying to run a tawdry little life according to some code of morals she's picked out of a book or a play, and getting all mixed up."

"You mean who doesn't think for herself."

"Perhaps we've exaggerated the virtue of thinking for ourselves," said Lewis. "I don't mean you, Deb. But still, even with you—suppose Tim had turned out to be a bum or you'd lost one of the kids—where would you have been?"

"You mean I couldn't stand up to it? Couldn't get through it?"

"You'd go on," said Lewis, "because you've a technique of defeat. You'd be sporting. But you'd be lost. The thing about Marie—the amazing thing—is that no matter what happened she wouldn't really be dependent on me."

"I wouldn't count on that."

"We keep going off at tangents," he said, impatiently. "The thing I'm trying to say ——"

"Somewhat extravagantly ——"

"As you like. The thing I'm insisting on saying is that while you regard her faith as a drawback, to me it's an asset. It makes her more beautiful, deepens her quality. She derives from something we don't and can't derive from."

"You're just crazy in love with her," said Deborah, "for all your fine talk."

"As far as that goes—and can go—absolutely."

"Then there's nothing to be done about it. Will she marry you?"

"I think she may," said Lewis. "I think perhaps she will."

His thought went to Marie and his lean, dark face grew tender. Deborah and her brother had always been close. She had seen him often when some woman had engaged his affection or interest. But not like this. He had always had the appearance, during those affairs, of being thoroughly in control. Today he was different.

It was she who took up the abandoned talk after a minute or two.

"Of course I should congratulate you. She's a lovely person. I thought that from the first time I laid eyes on her, and since she came back from Europe she's been even more beautiful. But it's queer. There's a curious remoteness ——"

"Perhaps it's shyness."

"No. I know when a person's shy. I can always beat that down. It's in moments when she's been

most friendly, most outspoken, that I sometimes feel the gap between us that she makes no effort to bridge, and that I can't get over unless she helps."

He smiled at her seriousness.

"It's your baffled passion for climbing into other people's minds, Deborah. Marie won't let you in, that's all. That's what makes your grievance or worry or whatever it is."

"Do you think she'll let you in?"

"Perhaps. I shan't ask her to."

"But if her mind is already so given to something that you don't either understand or believe in ——"

"You've come around the circle—back to bigotry. If you mean that I should fear the rivalry of the Roman Catholic Church, well, no, I don't. It's a good rival. In one way, I'm willing to share with it."

"You say that now," said Deborah, "but you've never been married."

"I'll have to take my chance."

"You'll be stickily rich," said Deborah.

"I mind that much more than the Church complication. It's not an easy fortune to marry."

"So Tim says. How will you and your new stepfather get on—and Tom Collins?"

Lewis groaned.

"Maybe I won't have to see them except on Thanksgiving and Christmas, for family occasions."

"You can be just as funny as you like. But if you

marry Marie, you marry into the Hawley interests. You can't help it, can you?"

"I don't think that needs to affect my judgment or politics."

"Then you'll have to fight them," said Deborah, definitely. "You know the kind of men they are. You know the way they've played their hands. You know that the Hawley interests mean a certain kind of underground work. And how can you fight that when your wife's fortune is on the other side?"

"I'm going to cross that bridge when I come to it."

"And get married in the meantime?"

"If I'm that fortunate."

There was such humility, such yearning in his tone that Deborah suddenly gave in.

"Yes, you're lucky if you care like that. It's the caring that counts—not what happens to you."

"You know ——"

"But what will Charlotte say to it?"

"Charlotte," said Lewis, "is not so much a woman as a tract on women. An inquiry into women. A psychological report on them. She's at liberty to say what she likes—just so I don't have to listen to it. Thank God, Marie doesn't think. When she wants to think, she prays."

"There's something almost blasphemous in that, coming from you."

"Blasphemous to prefer meditation to argument?"

"The kind of meditation that means acceptance and obedience and discipline—all those things."

"All those things are both profound and orderly," answered Lewis, a twist of humor in his mouth.

Deborah gave up.

"You say Marie's in the city?"

"She came down from Carmine yesterday. Want to lunch with us at the University Club?"

"I can't. Will you bring her here for dinner?"

"If you like—and she likes. I'll telephone later."

It was spring again and Alice Jeffrey had been dead nearly a year, gone into an eternity which she had entered with infinite precautions and grave rites. At intervals and on anniversaries she became real to her daughter, pitiable and fearful and blessed, but in between she misted into a memory. It seemed a long time to Marie since she had been otherwise than she was now, orphaned and, in spite of the anchorage of her fortune, very much adrift. For a few terrible months she had lived with her mother's ghost, consecrating days that seemed to have no end to respect and mourning. Nellie Muldeen Floyd had written long letters in her beautiful convent handwriting, urging Marie to come to visit her. Nellie's child was born and most successfully, her second child was being prepared for, and she was finding the claims and rebellions of maternity most exciting. But Marie did not want to see her. She

had heard also from the Philadelphia Hawleys, who wrote letters of condolence and included invitations to come and stay indefinitely with them. Marie answered them politely and did not go. Why she stayed in Carmine she hardly knew. Perhaps she felt that she could not tear away from her only roots, those two graves and the mines which sometimes also seemed like enormous graves. She was, of course, greatly inquired about, somewhat besought. The second and third generations of that society in the Lake ports and more distant river cities, which her father had been amused to ignore, were growing far more stable, less pretentious, and taking themselves more for granted with the passing years. Marie Hawley was interesting because she was rich and beautiful and said to have gone abroad in search of adventure. There were legends and anecdotes current about her, most of them based on the scantest of possibilities. Lewis Sanford had heard a good many of them before he met Marie one morning on the outskirts of a golf course which had been skillfully developed on some ragged hills near Carmine.

He had met her once before at Deborah's and thought her lovely. But this morning there was a stirring in himself which was surprising. He knew a good deal about women and men and their relations, and had come to assume that his very detailed knowledge would preclude his ever experiencing that kind of love which took emotion almost back to its

source. He was not skeptical or woman-weary. He found women quite as interesting as men, infinitely more venturesome in the present generation, and the confusing warfare between mental and physical revolutionists and women Tories still swearing allegiance to man seemed to Lewis a rather tragic and hopeless combat. But he had assumed that his own feeling for women was too much diluted by all he knew from experience and all he had been told to be ever tasted in its full strength again. So on this May morning he astonished himself.

It was Sunday, which to Lewis meant the day in the week when business was suspended, when, because of an ancient Christian custom perpetuated by industrial agreement, nerves and bodies could make a gesture at least toward a holiday. It was Sunday, which to Marie was the day when it was a mortal sin not to go to church. She could not possibly have stayed away from church. It was not a matter of choice. She had to go. And she had been there, at seven o'clock, when the sun was dancing on the stained-glass windows where saints and martyrs took attitudes of bliss or sorrow. She had not prayed fervently. But she had no doubt that, at the ringing of the golden bell, she had been in the immediate presence of her Maker. As to how that was conceivable, she did not concern herself. She had neither the vanity of mind nor the dependence upon it which must exclude miracles. Her thoughts had spun webs of distraction, but she

knew that God forgave such frailty and was well accustomed to it.

Then she had driven out to the golf club. Marie liked the early morning and the little rises in the land which spread the country out wider and wider. But she was glad not to be alone and welcomed the meeting with Lewis Sanford and the clear, almost incredulous admiration in his eyes. Already she liked him. She was more at ease with him than she ever was with Deborah, more sure of herself. There was in each of them a mounting pleasure in being with the other, all the more delightful because it was unexpected and unsought. Marie took it more simply than Lewis. She had known that some man would bring her this curious sense of intimacy, this feeling that with him anything might happen. She knew, in excited, triumphant innocence, that out of the very material of sin virtue could be built. They had told her that this would happen.

It happened with great swiftness. Almost from the first Lewis had known that with him it was no debatable thing. His reason, he saw, would be no match for his ardor and it was wiser to make his thought serve his passion than to engender any quarrel between the two. To that end he considered the points which he offered to Deborah. But he knew quite well that they made no difference, that they were only arguments after the fact. This was no common wave

of desire. He wanted to marry Marie and he wanted her exactly as she was. For she had made his half-chilled emotions become intense and simple, humble and proud, gentle and demanding, and he longed to come closer to the course of such terrific power. He did not want to resist it. He wished, above all things, to yield to it. He wanted to keep discussion at arms'-length, as well as argument, and anything else that might clog the swiftly running stream of his passion.

Since that Sunday morning he had managed to see her often, creating out of each occasion some new one. He had very quickly become welcome in the house where she lived with her stepfather. It was the same house which her own father had built years ago, but it was altered almost beyond recognition. It seemed adjusted now, reconciled at last to its environment. Shutters, which Fred Hawley had forgotten to add, were hooked back from its windows and it was painted white, no longer staring yellow. Hardy trees and shrubs had grown into slow confidence about it, giving it as much privacy as could be expected in the starkness of Carmine.

Marie, who asked and took advice far more intelligently than her mother had ever been able to do, had done away with many of the pretensions of the earlier furnishings and blended the comfort which she had kept. There were no cheapnesses, no attempt at distinction, and a good deal of green and brown coloring took the light pleasantly. The people of the

town held it to be a show place, a mansion. And it was a house which showed that wealth was in residence there, though it managed, perhaps because it was growing old and had been copied from houses immeasurably older, to avoid being self-conscious or pompous. Marie, always seeming as if she did not quite belong in it, always with an indefinite manner of being a guest herself, would pour tea at the frail gold table for anyone who came in and neglect her own cup, the smoke of her cigarette curling around her oval face and the smooth, lustrous hair that was bound back from it. She had the curious, changing eyes of the Irish, blue, gray, black, always with meditation in their depths even when they were gay, and a skin like cream, which Carmine no doubt could not have achieved without Paris. It was a Celtic face but something else had shaped it, differentiated it from its own type, kept it from being overcast with fear and defiance and the shadows which generations of precarious and insufficient living have made indelible.

She was not quick in conversation. The apt things that came into Deborah's mind never haunted her own. She did not trouble to straighten out other people's ideas nor add to them.

"But what do you think?" Deborah would ask sometimes. "What's your idea, Marie?"

She asked it almost imperatively one day. They were talking of a murder, not yet twenty-four hours

old. A bootlegger, keeper of a vile resort and vender of very cheap women, had been killed, astonishingly, by a stolid Swede who had been previously held to be respectable. Deborah contended that he still was. He had lived soberly and frugally and cared for his wife and children for years, until, flaming with bad alcohol, and at the mercy of some wild, possessive desire, he had shot and knifed the man who had interfered because he was beating one of the women in the resort.

"If they're after justice," said Deborah, "they ought to reward Swanson for murdering that man. Kravach has been a menace here for years. He's deserved murder for a long time—about one murder a day since we've been up here. And he's protected. You can't get his place closed, for some reason. Then he dies, with that dreadful travesty of chivalry, protecting a woman for whose debauchery he was being paid. It's so twisted. They clap the man who killed him into jail, though he was crazy with the moonshine he'd been sold in Kravach's resort. And poor Swanson's wife and children look as if they'd been struck by lightning, conscious of the terrible cloud they're under and not in the least sure what it's all about. I went to see them today. He used to work for us and I know that normally he's a good, honest workman. He built our cottage in the winter when the mines were closed. Poor fellow. It was an act of public service to kill that vicious Kravach."

"But it was murder," said Marie.

"Aren't you glad he's dead and out of the way? It's certainly a good thing."

Marie stood up, graceful and negligent in her green sweater dress.

"No one has the right to take life."

"Kravach was bad. He deserved killing."

"Even then," said Marie, "life and death aren't in our hands, are they?"

It was that sort of thing that troubled Deborah. But not Lewis. In the clarity and wholeness and definiteness of Marie's thought he took delight. He was tired of the heavy traffic of opinion, in which it took such skill to get about. Deborah, intensely disturbed by the tortuous ways of justice and the lack of a special ruling for Knute Swanson, who had beaten a prostitute into insensibility and killed the owner of a dive, was what he was used to. Marie, abstracting the whole matter into simple rules of life and death, refusing to deny the crime and yet contributing generously to a fund for Swanson's defense, seemed not only more beautiful but more profound.

He met Martin Jeffrey at Marie's house; or perhaps it was Jeffrey who was now the householder there. Years had made a difference in him, too. In the manner in which the elderly, well-dressed capitalist offered a highball, mixed from a very special brand of whisky, there was little trace of the ambitious lawyer who had taken widowed Alice Hawley

under his protection. Jeffrey knew his way about now, and if he still looked to see on which side his bread was buttered, it was with a larger gesture. Perhaps in the expectation of more butter. When he went to St. Paul or Chicago or New York he was received in important offices, put up at famous clubs. Lewis, who, in common with the rest of the Sanfords and the Hales, had seen little to admire and much to distrust in Jeffrey's political and financial methods, found him personally an affable man with a carefully guarded tongue.

He and Marie were apparently on the most comfortable of terms. He showed her both deference and affection, but between them Lewis saw no great warmth of feeling. He noted how simply Marie accepted Jeffrey's judgment on anything that was connected with the management of the mines or the condition of the industry. It was as if she were in the habit of allowing him to do all her thinking in those directions and only bring the ideas to her for an approval as automatic as a signature.

There were other places where he saw Marie, not only under her own roof. They played golf and went on swimming parties at Deborah's cottage, which she had built for summer sports on a pine-edged lake near by, and there Marie became another person, burned by the sun, tousled with exercise. His imagination often stole her into dreams and settings of his own. She was nearly always beautiful. But, as he

told Deborah, it was not that alone. Beauty he could admire without this necessity of possession. It seemed to him that he was approaching the very source of the relation between man and woman, something far more vital than satisfaction, something never quite explained and better left that way.

Chapter Five

ON THE DAY OF THAT TALK with Deborah, he asked Marie to marry him. He had been lunching with her, and later they had driven far out into the country. Through a cloudy afternoon first, and then the sunlight broke through and scattered itself over valleys and hills along the road. Finally Lewis stopped the car in a high place on the edge of a narrow, unfrequented highway, as if he had half consciously found the background for the things he wished to tell her. Neither of them had ever been there before and the view was a discovery. Below them the sun flooded clumps of cowslips. There were red barns and little dun-colored houses and fields neat with their first spring planting. It was softer country than that around Carmine and sprinkled with homes and farms that seemed very friendly in their anonymity.

For a few minutes they said little, except to speak of the sun and the shadows, tasting the pleasure of being together.

"You seem so remote," he said at length. "What shall I do to bring you closer?"

"Do I? I don't feel remote."

He drew her into his arms and it seemed to him that all loveliness was there and all joy and all desire. In that moment he wished that he had never kissed a woman before.

"Marie, you're going to marry me?"

"Are you asking me?" she questioned with a laugh that was breathless.

"I don't know how to ask you. I don't want to use all the over-worked phrases and words that have lost their meanings because cheap people have wrapped cheap feelings in them. But everything in me is asking you, Marie—has been asking you for weeks."

"It's queer about marriage," she said. "There are days when I'm not at all sure I want to be married." She straightened and locked her hands over her knees. "Yet everything else seems to be so temporary. As if you were checked in a parcel-room, waiting until some one came along to claim you and get you out. I suppose all girls who aren't married feel like that."

"You think they still do? With so many things open to them? I thought they were becoming independent of marriage and men—as far as it pleases them."

"They say so," she answered, dubiously, "but still it's what women seem to be always thinking about, underneath. Perhaps when it's settled, it's different.

When they are married or know they're not going to be."

He laughed. "You're letting them down awfully."

"No, I'm not. It's what they want. What we're here for. Women keep looking for men and men for women all the time."

"Men and women need each other," he said, "but I've never known how great the need could be until now. Or how individual. That one man and one woman out of a world could bring feeling to such a height as it's come to me. There are friends and people I care for—and, at an infinite distance from them, you, the only indispensable person."

His voice was shaken with emotion and she turned to him.

"You make it beautiful."

"My darling—how could it be anything else with you?"

She did not tell him that she was still haunted by certain memories of Nellie Muldeen and her husband.

"But of course," she said at length, "I'm a Catholic. Does that make any difference to you?"

"That's one of the things I love about you."

She looked puzzled.

"But you don't believe in the Church?"

"Not in its doctrine, perhaps. But I think it's a magnificent institution. It's probably responsible for

most of the order and certainly for a great deal of the beauty in the world today."

"They always warn you against mixed marriages," said Marie, "but somehow I've always thought I'd marry a non-Catholic. My father wasn't a Catholic."

"So there's a strain of pagan in you, too, is there?"

"But I couldn't ever give up the Church."

"Why should you?"

"I just meant—you know it makes a difference with some people. They have dreadful prejudices against Catholics."

"I've a prejudice in favor of one of them!"

But she was entirely serious.

"We'd have to be married as the Church allows. By a priest, I mean. And there are other things ——"

He kissed her hands, her lips.

"Whatever they are, my dear, they don't frighten or worry me. It's you I'm marrying. I wish I could believe in your Church with you. It would be great luck. But I can't. Certain things have been bred out of my family. We aren't able to believe. We've doubted for three centuries. Doubt's in our blood. But if you think for a minute that I'd ever interfere with your faith or quarrel with its rulings, you're wrong. You worship your God—only let me worship you ——"

They dined that night at the Sanford house. It was a great mansion on an historic avenue. All up and

down its length for at least a mile were the houses of the rich and powerful. They were the forts in which they defended themselves against life, the bases from which they sent forth attack. They had not always managed to keep up a successful defense, of course. Scandal, death, pain, even crime and suicide had won occasional victories. But it had in sixty years become one of the famous avenues which has a certain rapport with other streets of its kind in other cities. It was a dowager street. To marry anyone who lived along it was in a way to marry into its connection. The connection was large and important and worldly enough to absorb many a mesalliance, many a scapegrace son, many a daughter gone violently and abusively modern. The street took most phases of modernity in its stride. Only the income tax set it shivering. It was rather intimately connected with certain estates in England and with great families in France. It had points of contact with Southampton, Palm Beach, Newport, Bar Harbor, Asheville, the Ojai Valley, and most other places where people of wealth and leisure gathered. It quarreled with and disposed of and exposed and concealed things which happened up and down its length, but in seventy years it could not help becoming very human. Fundamentally it was held together by its tremendous property interests. It was never quite foot-loose and it was certain to inherit.

The tremendous, turreted, pillared, arched gray

stone house of the Fairbanks family, deep in its carefully trimmed hedges, the house in which none of the heirs would live, was across the street from the Sanfords. A will kept a dim life in it, paid the caretakers and gardeners and housekeepers, and at Christmas-time or on great occasions—once a prince had visited there—it was a rendezvous for the entire family. Officially it belonged to Will and Charlotte Fairbanks, who were brother and sister and the only unmarried Fairbanks. But Will preferred his Park Avenue apartment, which he was said to share at the moment with a charming actress, and Charlotte lived at her club.

The Sanford family had not let their house go into gloom like that, even after its builder had died. Old Mrs. Sanford still lived there, when she was in the city, and there was usually some member of her big, spread-out family connection staying with her. Deborah had brought a couple of her children down for this week-end on a visit to the dentist, and Philip was home for a few days. There were several other people for dinner. Charlotte Fairbanks was there and Brett Jones. Lewis brought Marie.

She was not embarrassed. Luxury and fine manners had long since ceased to make her feel awkward. But she felt strange. She knew that all these people were on different terms with life than her own. She had known it about Deborah. And Charlotte

Fairbanks, thin, athletic, restive of mind, was no different.

When Marie came through the hall, after leaving her wraps upstairs, they were talking. She could hear them. It seemed curious conversation for people who lived in the grand manner.

"What did you do about the rats, Charlotte?" Lewis was asking.

"I'm still fighting them."

"Did you get another cat?"

"Yes. But he wasn't any good. He was kind of a Van Vechten cat. I told them that I wanted a rat-killer this time, one with no degenerate or luxurious tastes. Jacobs is morbid. He says he can't see how they got in. It seems to me more to the point to get them out."

"It's the garbage-cans that attract them this time of the year," said Mrs. Sanford. "Jacobs must have left some grille open. You should put in an incinerator, Charlotte."

"There's something about the flues that makes it difficult," said Charlotte. "And it seems so immoral to spend any more money on that old place."

Marie came in then. She was wearing a dinner dress, brocaded in silver and blue and with long, full, medieval sleeves. She was like a dark princess and Lewis's heart turned over at sight of her. Charlotte looked at her with quick, complete scrutiny as she was introduced to Mrs. Sanford.

"And Charlotte Fairbanks," said Lewis, "the lady who has a knife-swallowing mind."

"You're a legend," said Charlotte to Marie. "I keep just missing meeting you. Once in Paris. And Deborah promised me. I'm glad it's come off at last."

"I met your father once," Marie told her.

"Where?"

"When I was a little girl. He came up to Carmine to see my father about something. I knew he was a great man."

"He loved those north-country trips," said Charlotte, "especially in winter. And they were family scandals. I hope he was sober when you met him."

"No," Marie told her, "but my father wasn't, either."

Charlotte laughed. "You've lived up there all your life, haven't you?"

"It's my home, you know."

"You must have a wonderful point of view on a lot of things the rest of us only guess at. I think that part of the country is the great romance of the state."

"And I want Brett Jones to meet you, Marie," said Deborah.

Brett Jones gave Marie a very formal bow, a glance of admiration, and a cocktail.

"Brett, sometimes you act just like a waiter," said Charlotte, regarding him. "I'm always expecting

you to murmur something about breast of guinea hen in my ear. It's the way you bend at the waist, I think."

"It's my gallant effort not to be a modern gentleman."

"Not a gentleman?" said Mrs. Sanford, with her asthmatic little laugh, nodding to the man who announced dinner. "Why don't you want to be a gentleman, Brett?"

"I don't like their manners. They have a combination of barroom ease and the kind of insolence you see in a fraternity stag line." Brett took the arm of the old lady. "Charlotte likes that. But she always did like rough games."

Lewis said to Marie: "Charlotte, Brett, and I have been abusing one another now for twenty years. It began with snowballs—or mud."

"Charlotte put ice in her snowballs," complained Brett.

"She still does."

"Life isn't easy for a woman," said Charlotte, following Mrs. Sanford to the dining-room; "sometimes we need ice."

"You've been rowing for years about life not being easy for women," Brett objected, as they sat down and the oysters were placed before them. "You've been fighting for years and you've got every concession and still you fight. What more do women want? They can go anywhere they please.

They can do anything they want. They buy and sell husbands to great advantage. And they certainly get all the publicity."

"Those aren't the things women need."

"They're what they asked for."

"I've an idea we've been on the wrong track in what we were after," said Charlotte. "That's what's gradually been dawning on me."

Brett groaned. "You mean we have to start all over again on a new form of feminism? Remember we're not the men we were. We're a shattered remnant."

Charlotte turned to Deborah.

"Where we made our first mistake was in assuming women wanted independence. And most of them really don't. What we should have gone after was a new relationship to men."

"Didn't we get that incidentally?"

"I'm not so sure. You feel sometimes as if the surface were scratched and a terrific lot of dust raised and that's about all."

"The only relationship to men you understand, Charlotte," said Brett, "is the drawn sword."

Charlotte lifted her eyes. They were eager, full of motive, purpose, and courage. They rested, perhaps by accident, on Marie.

Deborah said that some women had always made a good thing out of the relationship.

"Before and after we got into the papers," she added.

"I suppose," said Charlotte, "but that's just luck. Chemical accident. People happen to be the right combination once in a while. Mostly they don't. But women keep on trying. Sometimes it seems the only thing they're fundamentally interested in."

"That's what Marie said today," remarked Lewis.

"Do you think that, too?"

"But isn't it obvious?" asked Marie.

"Take that, Charlotte. Between the eyes."

"I didn't mean it that way," protested Marie. "I meant that wherever you look, you see that every woman is thinking about some man."

"Deborah is," said Charlotte, "but I'm not. Are you?"

Marie laughed.

"Oh yes," she answered, and there was such revelation in her voice that suddenly the talk became more than a skirmish of words. Lewis rose to his feet.

"Of course she is! Marie is going to marry me," he told them, and there was a confusion of congratulation.

Old Mrs. Sanford smiled and nodded.

"I knew before dinner," she said, and indeed she had known before that. She had not been ignorant of the reason why Lewis had spent so few week-ends at home this summer. Deborah had discussed it with

her mother and tonight Lewis had told Mrs. Sanford that it was settled. The old lady made no objection, but she thought regretfully about Charlotte, even as she smiled. That would have been so suitable. Of course this was far better than having Lewis marry that Selvig girl with her eyes that made men lustful and her manners of the stage. This girl was beautiful—and well-bred, pleasantly modest, and rich. Too rich, Lewis had said, but his mother thought that money never came amiss. He had always been a dreamer and it would be a good thing to have him settled. The religion was a pity, but perhaps the girl would change. Catholic grandchildren, she thought, disdainfully. Well, it might not come to that.

With quick generosity Deborah decided that she had been wrong. It was all right if they felt that way toward each other. It was inevitable. The sin against the Holy Ghost was to deny feeling like that. She wished, in a moment's jealousy, that she were at the beginning of things, as they were. All those fresh delights ——

They were in Brett Jones's imagination, too. He felt under-sized, a man of words, shriveled and silly. What was it, after all, to be a friend of many clever people, to be popular at the club, play the best bridge in the city, and collect wood-cuts? There was a breeze of passion in the room that sent his little

achievements and exclusions and possessions flying into corners.

Charlotte felt the breeze. It had chilled her for a moment. In that instant she had felt old and plain and lonely, and known, with the ruthless frankness which she trained on herself as well as others, why she felt that way. Lewis was gone. Well, why not? She had never intended to marry him, never intended to marry anyone until she was convinced of marriage. But she had always been aware that Lewis knew what she was driving at, felt with her that reason and justice had to be infused into the life of men and women. He had sympathized with her impatience. She liked Lewis's mind, which she could never control and always had to respect because its logic was more stable than her own and its judgment more profound. Now he had picked himself a wife. The Hawley girl was beautiful. Men all had to have that. And a Catholic. How would Lewis like that? A Catholic's mind was never free, could never be quite free, nor even quite frank. That was what they bargained for, agreed to in that Church. Mystics—and Lewis was no mystic. Perhaps he wouldn't care, would think the compensations great enough. The deadly weight of the body on the mind, the dreadful deceit of it. She looked at Marie and wondered if she were right about her. Perhaps she was clever. There seemed little lightness, little wit; well, George Sand had been like that and how many

men her flowing sentences and flowing emotions had brought her!

They had served champagne and were drinking a toast. Charlotte was drinking it, too. She was standing, a girl of twenty-eight or -nine in a yellow dinner dress, with a thin, thoroughbred face, well molded shoulders, and an evenly tanned skin. She was watching the gray-blue eyes of Marie Hawley, which were lustrous with joy. Marie had not risen. They were drinking to her happiness.

Martin Jeffrey was also in the city. He had not come down on the same train which Marie had taken, for their ways were entirely separate. That had been agreed upon since she had come back from Europe at the time of her mother's death. It had been shortly after that when she had suggested that she might live by herself. She had even thought of building a house, seen it in her imagination, but Jeffrey had discouraged the idea with great finesse.

"I wouldn't do that," he said; "at any rate, don't rush into it. This house is surely big enough for the two of us. When your mother left it to me I'm sure it was with the idea that it would continue to be your home. I think that's what she hoped for and wished."

Toward the end poor Alice Jeffrey had not been lucid in her wishes. They had been for death and release from pain and for life eternal and for for-

giveness of a host of vague sins that seemed to worry her greatly. "For all the sins of my past life," she had kept repeating.

"Stay here for the present," said Martin Jeffrey, drawing Marie back from that memory, "and I don't want you to feel that I'm interfering with you in any way. I'm away a great deal and I suppose you will be coming and going. But my idea is to keep the house open, and we have a housekeeper whom we can trust, so there will be no great responsibility on you."

He put it plausibly as a temporary arrangement. He did not say that he wanted her near enough so that he could keep an eye on men who might try to marry her, nor that he did not want her to maintain a separate residence, because it might look like a break between them. It was not Jeffrey's habit to put things baldly, and if those things were in his mind he let them send out only guarded suggestions and inquiries. He was a man of independent fortune now. Enough property stood in his own name to make him wealthy. But his interests were deeply interwoven with Marie's and he knew that it was his connection with the fortune which Fred Hawley had left his daughter, that unwieldy, unreasonable, dramatic fortune, which made him really important. He was attorney for its interests, counselor to Marie. But none the less, the property stood in her name. A quarrel with her, a break, might change every-

thing. Her marriage might make new adjustments necessary. But again it might not. And Martin Jeffrey temporized and waited, a business in which he was altogether expert. There was no impatience in him.

He had temporized for years. His whole policy had been defensive. He never initiated anything if he could help it. His craft was in allowing other men to devise plans and schemes and to wait until they actually affected the interests which he guarded. Then it was time enough to think of bargaining or buying off or ruining or absorbing. But not until then. It was on such an errand that he was in the city now, on such an errand that the fat man with brown, unhealthy spots on his face came up to the hotel to see Jeffrey.

Jeffrey was not staying at the hotel. He always maintained a suite there for such business as he and his friends might wish to do in private, but his name never appeared on the register. He ate and slept at his club, where he was a gentleman of considerable leisure, a good shot at billiards, an adequate fourth at bridge. In his hotel room he gave an effect of leisure also, but it was a measured, waiting kind of leisure, quite unrelaxed.

The man with the brown spots on his face rapped at the door and was admitted by a handsome, youngish man who was seen very often around the edges of the state legislature when it was in session. His

income seemed to come out of the air. For he was on no pay roll nor, clearly, was he in business for himself.

"Hello, Watts!" said Jeffrey to the fat man.

Watts put out a moist hand.

"Hello! I thought I'd drop around. Heard you were down. How are you?"

"Sit down. Getting a little warmer, isn't it?"

"Warmer," agreed the fat man.

"Want something with ice in it?"

"Never refuse a safe drink," said Watts, with an air of epigram, "never refuse."

Young Barton knew just how to mix them. The fat man drank and drew breath. Jeffrey lit a cigar. His manner indicated that he would make no advances.

"How's everything up north?" asked Watts.

"Just about as usual."

"I suppose they're feeling pretty good about the way they hung up the last legislature."

"They didn't get any concessions to speak of."

"They didn't get any additional taxes, either."

"No—I guess they decided not to quite kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."

"It was smooth work," conceded Watts, who had been on the other side. "That bill pretty nearly went through."

"It's dead now. It won't come up again."

"Some one like it may."

"That's true," said Jeffrey, smoothly, "but if it does, the fallacies of it can always be shown."

Watts grinned. "Fallacies don't count for much. You've got to have votes in the legislature."

"They can be had, too."

"It isn't so easy to handle a legislature as it used to be," complained Watts. "When you were dealing with party men you knew where you were at. But all these birds that aren't responsible to anybody but the neighbors and don't know anything make trouble. They get balky."

Jeffrey nodded.

"I saw Tom Collins the other day," said Watts, irrelevantly.

Jeffrey knew that. Collins had done the preliminary work with Watts. Watts was to be bought now, not with money, but with certain political concessions which were clearly understood by each of them. But he would have to make his own offer. The fat, hard-breathing man was a political power. He held no office, but he controlled them through other people. He was an enemy to be feared if not respected. If he was making terms now, it meant not only that the victory in the last legislature had been significant, but that plans were already beginning to shape up for the coming years and he needed new and forceful allies.

"Tom's just had an operation for gallstones," said Jeffrey; "a few weeks ago."

"He's looking good."

"I guess he hasn't got his strength back."

"He was with Michelson the other day. I guess Michelson's got his face all fixed for the Senate next presidential year."

"As good a man as you could get in there, isn't he?" inquired Jeffrey, as if he were the merest onlooker.

"I guess he'd like the job, all right. Maybe he could get it and maybe he could fill it. But we don't want to have any more bad breaks on national committeemen. That hasn't worked out so well."

"Blake's done the best he could," said Jeffrey, tolerantly, "for a man who didn't know the ropes."

"He's through," said Watts, and his voice was suddenly hard and cruel. "He's made more trouble since he's had that job than anyone else made in ten years."

"Well, he has three years to go."

"And that's all."

"I don't know who'd take his place."

Watts looked at Jeffrey and made his trade.

"Bill Carver."

"Pretty hard to put him across with the delegates from the north, after the way he led that fight for the tax bill."

"They'll forget that," said Watts. "They've got to forget it. And Carver isn't any damned amateur

like Blake. God! That Blake goes around taking advice from women and birds like this Sanford."

"Sanford has interests of his own to protect. He and the Hale outfit can't be overlooked."

"That's all right," Watts chuckled. "We don't overlook him when it comes to a campaign fund. But what they know about politics they got out of a speller. Hello!"

"Hello, Tom!" said Jeffrey.

His brother-in-law had just come in. Collins was a tall, broad-shouldered man of fifty-odd years. He prided himself on an appearance which became an orator and one of the leaders in the House, and innocent ladies, delving into politics for the first time, were always impressed by the way he spoke of the duties and obligations of lawmakers. His thick gray hair grew back over his forehead in a splendid curve and when he was eloquent it too became impassioned.

"How are you?"

"Not so good," said Collins, "not so good. These doctors cut you up and stick you together again. I don't know whether they know what they're doing or not. . . . A mild one," he added to young Barton; "make it weak. I'm on the sick list still."

Watts said he never saw him looking better.

"I was three weeks in that hospital."

"Must have had a good-looking nurse, then."

"The second one was. The first one was a hag.

I said to the doctor ——" He lapsed into reminiscence which had more than a flavor of vulgarity in it.

"Well," said Watts at length, "I guess I'll get along. I heard you had a little shooting up your way the other day. Picked off Kravach, didn't they?"

"He was a good man, too," said Collins, referring not at all to his virtue.

"Accident, wasn't it?"

"Pure accident. A drunken bum. Now they're getting up a fund to defend him. The Ladies' Aid or something." He laughed again and made another none too savory joke.

Watts repeated that he was getting along. He seemed to be asking for decision or answer, but it was not directly forthcoming. Jeffrey did not do business that way.

"Drop in again," he said; "always glad to see you."

The fat man grunted and went away, and Tom Collins mixed himself another drink, not quite so weak as the first one.

"Did he speak about Carver?" he inquired.

"Came right out with it."

"We've got to give him that," said Collins. "There's going to be a lot doing in the next few years and we're going to need Watts. He'll play ball."

"He never has yet."

"This time he'll stay tied," said Collins. "He's

got to. He can't get anywhere without us. We socked him in the eye pretty good this last session. Besides, the next election is a long way off. A long way off. Nobody knows what's going to happen."

"Well, I didn't turn him down," Jeffrey remarked, "but we have to be careful how we tie up to that crook. It isn't the sort of thing I'd like to see in the papers. There's so many people nosing around all the time."

"Let them nose," said Collins, "for all the good it's going to do them. Of course Blake has his friends. Men like Tim Hale and Sanford. Say ——"

"What is it?" Jeffrey asked over the pause.

"What's there to this talk about Marie and Lewis Sanford?"

"How much talk is there?"

"Quite a bit, I guess. She's going about with him, isn't she? That Hale crowd's taken her up. Is she going to marry Sanford?"

"I don't know."

"How would you like that?" asked Collins, curiously.

"I don't know that, either. What do you know about Sanford?"

"He's a high-brow," said Collins; "not so easy to deal with."

"Not a fortune-hunter, though."

"No—I shouldn't say so. He must be well fixed himself."

"He ought to be the kind of man who'd leave his wife's interests alone if they're well cared for. Finicky about that, I should imagine."

Even that had to be taken into account, the perceptions and delicacies of a gentleman's mind considered and figured on. They had dealt with gentlemen before. Jeffrey was continually being taken for one.

"Well," remarked Collins at length, "of course she's going to marry some one. She's certainly an awfully good-looking girl. Not much snap to her, though, is there?"

"Like her mother," Jeffrey said; "and yet, you know, every now and then you run across a streak of the old man in her. You know sometimes I get to thinking of that old boozer and the way he got in when the getting was good, and I have to hand it to him."

"And he stayed in."

"He was shrewd. And hard. You couldn't pry him loose from anything he'd got his hands on."

"And now it just piles up," said Collins, thoughtfully. "Marie ought to be pretty grateful to you. So you think she may marry Sanford?"

"I wonder how he feels about marrying a Catholic," said Marie's stepfather.

Chapter Six

IT SEEMED SOMETIMES TO the Reverend Michael Carroll as if it could not be true. This strange place to which he had come, this raw, crude village which had about it nothing rustic and nothing primitive, was unreal. He still found it difficult to believe that he had been sent so far from the diocese where he had been ordained. New York existed; and actual, too, were Rome and that Ohio town where he had served mass as an altar boy and ecstatically dreamed of vocation for the priesthood. But even after six months of residence it was hard to credit Carmine with being anything else than fantasy. Huge mines—and they were the first he had ever seen—some with lights flickering about their caves far into the night, some closed and with moss growing over abandoned entrances and stripped cliffs, busses speeding to and fro between the town and the near-by cities, great schools extravagantly equipped, miners who spoke little or no English passing him on the sidewalk without recognition, shabby Finnish and Scandinavian women, shabbier Italians, wives of company officials driving Packards,

secret politics, open vice, priggishness, shooting, snobbishness—all of it couldn't fit together. And to establish the connection between all this and the Church of Our Lady of Victory was the problem of the Reverend Michael Carroll.

He knew that he had been sent to no makeshift task and that there was work to be done. Secretly he marveled that his superiors—and God—should have chosen him for effort that seemed to bring out only incompetence in him. Not that he dreamed of resenting any humiliation or discipline which might be incidental; but it distressed him to be ineffective in the midst of so much need. After his first few harsh years of missionary life, his period of learning hardship and evil and devotion as it lay beyond the seminary walls, he had been recalled to New York. There he had been one of the young priests in a great parish and there he could have stayed forever and found all of life. Learning was there and piety and graciousness and, though there was also sin and crime and struggle, it was possible to work from them all a blend of humanity.

Carmine was different. It was a rough sketch of a great industry done in red crayon. It was a rootless village. That was one of the things that appalled him. He could find in none of his parishioners that feeling of belonging to the place where they lived, which was in most of the people he had ever known so vital and human a sentiment. If he struck

a note of home in the minds of people in Carmine it was because they recalled some other town or city, or spoke of some other country. Here there was a living to be earned. That was why they had come and why, reluctantly and transiently, they remained. When there was no more living in sight, they would go without regret. If they could; if they had money for transporting themselves and their families elsewhere.

There seemed to be a tremendous problem as to how long the living would be there. How long the mines would yield, or at least how long they would be allowed to operate. Father Carroll had heard, almost since the day he arrived, about men turned away at short notice, of the reasons for the drifted loungers with sullen faces on the streets. He had heard, too, of a net of politics around an industry which seemed to be diminishing under artificial pressure. Reduced to simple terms, the fact seemed to be that the mines were being taxed past the patience of the operating companies. To the land tax had been added royalty taxes, occupational taxes, tonnage taxes, until every piece of ore that was brought out of the mines was a great expense as well as a yield. If there was not sufficient profit in mining the ore, the operators threatened to close down. Many of the smaller independents had already done so. There was no logical reason why they should not. Those in ultimate control were rich. Their

holdings were not alone in ore. Their money could be turned to advantage in investments of a higher yield; and if the dream of matching the great iron fortunes of the past was no longer capable of realization, other ways of making money must be found.

The matter had not yet reached that pitch. There were battles going on in the legislature, and the lobbies promoted by mine-owners did what they could. To Father Carroll it looked at first like a clear case of justice and reason. He could not understand why men of even limited vision should kill a goose that was laying such golden eggs. But he began to hear other things and they wound in and out, a long, dingy, circuitous procession of stories of the buying and selling of legislatures, of town bosses, of old deceits and trickeries, of the way that everything the corporations did was regarded with suspicion, of the way they had seized every chance to make money and sacrificed people almost at random. He could find no firm loyalties anywhere, though he found plenty of people who had been hushed into silence and discretion by those who owned or controlled them.

He had seen the poor woman to the door this afternoon and come back very thoughtfully to his stark little sitting-room, plainer than ever with the gray day outside doing nothing to cheer it. There was no fire, and even late May in this country had the raw feeling of March in it sometimes. He be-

lieved very firmly in indifference to any environment and circumstances of his own, but a dark, threatening afternoon like this seemed to drive home any instance of pain and suffering. Yet there had been beauty, too, in Mrs. Kravach's visit. She had brought money for masses for her husband's soul, and Father Carroll knew how great the effort of her coming must have been. Shy, withdrawn, beaten and frightened by living, she had broken through all the barriers and come, and Father Carroll had been very tender, very understanding. He had not seen a poverty-stricken foreign woman. He had seen a woman beautiful with faith and with responsibility for another soul.

He was meditating on the insufficiency of human judgment because he knew, of course, how notorious and evil a life Kravach had lived. Kravach had done everything that cripples the soul; and yet, when he had been dying, fatally shot, there had been, Father Carroll thought, more than the panic fear of death in his eyes. There had been that amazing, clinging hope, a glimmer of faith, a belief that he was capable, even in that extremity, of salvation. A bad man going before his God, thought Father Carroll, desperately trying to strip his sins from him as he went. He thought of sin. The only proper emphasis must be on mercy. The unfortunate man in jail for murder—the sinner strangling in his death-bed repentance—who knew, anyway, when all motives

were resolved, how those two stood before their God? And here had come this desolate wife who must have known that her husband trafficked in women and vice, to bring a petition for masses in the hope that he might be eternally saved. Trusting in the supreme atonement. In her act alone, thought Father Carroll, is all the mercy of the world and all its pity and all its faith. And he decided also that he must find out how Mrs. Kravach was getting along in a material way. There was money enough to take care of her and her boy, she said. But the boy kept running away from school and worried her. Something must be done about that, thought the priest. The boy must be seen, the woman comforted, and masses said for that poor, unquiet, darkened soul which had left its shadow on so many other souls.

He tried to bend his mind to the condition of the parish finances, which he had been considering when Mrs. Kravach came and which were, he felt, unsatisfactory. There was too much reliance on the Hawley fortune, on the contributions which Miss Hawley, rich and generous, might be inclined to make. It did away with the sense that parishioners ought to have, that a church was built with their joint effort and its activities kept going only because of their continuance. The fact that Marie Hawley might have the church reroofed or buy an altar should not make the rest of them feel that their con-

tributions were unnecessary. For, being a wise priest, he knew that contributions brought a sense of ownership, did away with drifting.

The door-bell jangled and he heard the heavy step of his housekeeper going to answer it. Without curiosity Father Carroll looked up as she came back. A sick call, a beggar—he met those human incidents many times in a week, as simply as they came.

"It is somebody to see you, Father," said the woman, and after a moment Lewis Sanford came in.

The two men considered each other gravely in the first glance.

"My name is Sanford. Lewis Sanford. Can you give me a few minutes of your time?"

"Certainly," said the priest, aware at once that his caller was a gentleman. He knew that the name was familiar and important in the community, too, though he could not for the moment place it in its setting. "Won't you sit down?"

"I don't know how to go about this," Lewis began, taking one of the stiff armchairs, "so I shall simply have to ask you to make allowances for the fact that I am not a Catholic and am fumbling as to the correct procedure. But I spoke to a priest in St. Anthony the other day and he said that this matter would come under your jurisdiction."

"There are certain divisions of authority," the priest answered. "How can I help you?"

"I am going to marry one of your parishioners,"

said Lewis, "and I understand that when a Catholic marries a Protestant there are a number of obligations which must be recognized and some forms to be complied with. I am, of course, quite willing to do anything that is necessary."

Father Carroll asked, quietly, "Which one of my parishioners do you wish to marry?"

"Miss Hawley. Marie Hawley."

"How fortunate you are," said the priest. "She is a good and lovely girl."

His manner put it entirely on that basis, seemed to make the Hawley fortune of no consequence at all. Marie might have been any girl of good and gracious character and Lewis liked and was deeply grateful for the simplicity.

"I care very deeply for her," he answered, with less formality in his tone, "and to make her happy is all that I wish. All that I hope for."

"Marriage involves much more than happiness, Mr. Sanford."

"I want anything it may bring. Everything. As for her religion, that is something I respect and always shall respect. I am not a religious man myself. I suppose I am more of an agnostic than anything else. But I have always felt that if one has any faith, there is no option except to go the whole way and join the Catholic Church. Catholicism is the only great mystical movement which has affected the whole world. And while it is impossible for me to

accept much of its theology, I have a great admiration for the institution of the Church, both medieval and modern."

Father Carroll had often heard all that. It always seemed to him very thin, only patter. It always seemed to be so completely irrelevant. Still, he liked the young man and his gesture toward generosity.

"Yes," he said, "it is true that many non-Catholics have a kindly feeling toward the Church. But are you sure you want to marry a Catholic?"

"Very sure." Lewis hesitated for words of sufficient emphasis. He looked again at Father Carroll and saw nothing in that slender, rather weary-faced man, who might be young in fact although he seemed so old in manner, to deter confidence. "Marie's religion is part of her. If I may say it without seeming presumptuous, her faith is one of the beauties of her mind."

"I am sure it is," said Father Carroll, and asked if Lewis would care to smoke, proffering an excellent cigar. "I have a kindly friend who knows my weakness and keeps me supplied with cigars," he added with a smile of apology for his luxury.

The moment's pause and the small act of hospitality took the strain out of the interview. Both men settled back, and the talk found an easy stride.

"You live in Carmine?" inquired Father Carroll.

"I've been doing some experimenting with low-grade ores," said Lewis. "I don't know what we can

make of it or whether we can even make the mining of it possible under present conditions. But it's very interesting work."

"You're associated with one of the companies?"

"My family has certain holdings. But this work I'm doing is rather independent of that."

"I've not been here very long myself," said the priest, "but I confess that up to this point the country and its future troubles me. Puzzles me."

"It puzzles all of us," said Lewis. "It's hard to know what is going to happen. My brother-in-law, Stimson Hale, thinks that somehow there must be an agricultural background developed, something that will give the people more to tie to and something for them to fall back upon when the mines give out or become unprofitable."

"That's what they need. They've no love for the place, no real roots."

"It's hardly their fault. They've been pretty well mishandled. Still, that wasn't what I came to see you about, was it? I mustn't impose on your time."

"Take all of my time that you want. You say, Mr. Sanford, that you do not know what marrying a Catholic involves?"

"Of course I've heard of some of the well-known things."

"I think I can sum it up for you in a word. It involves recognition of marriage as a sacrament."

"And by sacrament you mean?"

"A means of spiritual grace."

Lewis said nothing.

"Believing that marriage is a sacrament," repeated the priest, "there are certain corollaries. It is indissoluble. It is an institution for the protection of the family and for the propagation of the race. It is only incidentally the vehicle of human passion. And if a man and a woman join their lives before God and with the sanction of the Church, the children with whom their marriage may be blessed must be given to Him."

The smooth, serious voice paused.

"You mean, in effect, that they must be brought up as Catholics?"

"That is part of it."

"I should have no objection to that, provided that the instruction were in competent hands."

The priest said: "One must be very sure. Sometimes, Mr. Sanford, it is our experience that a man feels differently about these things before and after his marriage."

"I have considered it. I knew of that requirement, of course."

The gray little room with its cheap furniture darkened. Clouds, weighted with rain, had come over the sky. The two men went on talking.

"When you say that it must be indissoluble," Lewis said, "you refer to the Church's stand on divorce?"

"The Catholic Church does not recognize divorce, Mr. Sanford."

"Doesn't that sometimes work great hardship on your people?"

"No," answered Father Carroll, quietly.

"But," said Lewis, "it's such terrific discipline. When you consider the youth and ignorance that take on marriage, when you see how people change with time, it seems a hard ruling. I don't think of this as affecting myself, you understand. I cannot conceive of this marriage of ours being anything but final. And yet, if I should fail in it, fail to keep Marie's love, I would not want to keep her bound to me. That would be the only consideration."

"But she would be bound to you. She would be your wife."

"Not unwillingly."

"Even then."

Lewis frowned. There were many things in his mind to say, but he was not sure how much frankness could go along with courtesy and delicacy in this matter.

"As I say, it's almost an academic question with me. I am quite willing to accept the ruling for myself. It does not even present a problem, because any wish for divorce would come from my wife and not from me; and she, of course, is a member of your Church. But practically, sir—if you don't mind my frankness ——"

"I am glad to have you frank."

"Then when you look at the ordinary marriage and admit no way out of it for either party in any case, it's not a pretty sight very often."

"Isn't it a prettier sight than the ordinary divorce?"

"There's a good deal to be said for that. But one's mind always comes back to unhappy individuals. Aren't you very often requiring an innocent person to suffer by refusing divorce? Penalizing two for the offenses of one? Isn't that the way it works out?"

"Not past endurance. The Church allows separation of married couples. It takes its stand on remarriage, which it does not permit while a man or woman has a living wife or husband."

"There are no exceptions?" asked Lewis, certain cases which were international gossip in his mind.

"None," replied the priest.

"But—and I hope I'm not being offensive—doesn't your occasional annulment take care of the important case of unhappiness and either ignore the unimportant one or leave it to shift for itself?"

Father Carroll hesitated.

"If no marriage has really existed between two people," he answered at length, "of course one is permissible. Certain misunderstandings about these things arise at times. We must all regret that. The decision in these cases rests with grave and wise men whose judgments must be final."

It was not the reply Lewis wanted. He felt them laying the point aside, removing it from discussion. Perhaps the priest felt that, too, for after a moment he voluntarily went on with further explanations.

"Mr. Sanford, as I said before, in the Catholic Church marriage is a sacrament. The Church does not believe that human relationships are the secure source of happiness, and that is one of the reasons why it teaches that marriage, if I may put it so, is also a relationship with God. We have divine authority for that belief. You speak of unhappy marriages, of men and women who do not want to live together, who find no peace or joy in one another, but I may confidently tell you, out of long experience, that from that very unhappiness I have seen great spiritual grace arise. The Church does not require men and women to suffer degradation at each other's hands or to undergo prolonged cruelty. But it does tell them of the great virtue of forbearance; that these relationships entered into in the sight of God are more important than either their satisfactions or their desires, and that fidelity to duty will ultimately bring them closer to God. We do not teach our people to avoid fear or suffering, or that anyone can escape a share in the burdens laid upon the world. We try to teach them to endure what comes, as the Son of Man once taught the world."

Against the darkened window, now spattered with

rain, Father Carroll's face was pale. His voice had a lift of inspiration. It was no longer personal.

"It's magnificent," said Lewis. "The only question is whether human beings are fine enough and sufficiently strong for such theories."

"They are not theories. They are simple, practical truths. I had a woman here an hour ago, who has long been married to a man whom the good people of this town considered evil. He had been unkind to her. He had made her suffer cruelly. Yet during his life she did not abandon him; when he died she was at his side and even now she does not feel that her responsibility for him is ended. She is wondering how she can help his soul. But all this is remote and perhaps to you more than a little dreary."

"No. You don't know what it means to find myself able to talk freely to you."

"Miss Hawley will be married in her own parish, I hope?"

"Here, I think."

"And when?"

"We both want it to be soon," said Lewis, and the magic came from his thought into his voice.

Father Carroll smiled. "Not too soon. There are a few formalities. Of course it is unnecessary for me to tell you that we always feel reluctant to marry a Catholic to a non-Catholic. You will pardon me for saying that experience upon experience has proved it unwise. There is a basic lack of sympathy and un-

derstanding which often creates difficulty. I have no doubt that you and Miss Hawley have considered these things past the point of persuasion. But I would be failing in my duty if I did not tell you that I think you propose for yourself, as well as for her, a very difficult course."

"I can't believe that I do. I am entirely sympathetic with Marie's religion. But even if I were not, it is not a thing in which I can conceive of conflict between us. I should never interfere with her."

"No," said the priest, and sighed strangely.

"As for any preliminary formalities, I have already said that I shall be glad to conform with them."

"We must have a talk or two. In your case the instructions will be quickly comprehended."

The word "instructions" jarred on Lewis's mind. He did not want instructions about anything so intimate, so secret as his marriage. Then he remembered that, after all, this was what he had come for. And looking at the pale, quiet priest he realized that there was no intrusion intended. Father Carroll was not speaking for himself. He was the mouthpiece of an institution.

"The essential points are, of course, those of which you have spoken—the indissolubility of marriage and the bringing up of any children in the Catholic Church."

The priest carried the talk again from discussion to dogma in his answer.

"All the relationships of the family are under the special protection of the Church. It blesses each one of them. It does not forget that the bearing of children is the primary purpose of marriage."

Lewis let that pass. He didn't believe it. It wasn't so with him at least. The primary purpose of his marriage was to love Marie, to be closer to her, to be part of her.

"And nothing that restricts or artificially limits the family is tolerated by the Church."

The priest went on talking, and once Lewis interrupted to ask: "But how about the physical health of women? Doesn't the Church consider that?"

"The Church is thinking of their spiritual welfare."

"But if the two conflict?"

"Why should they? Bearing children is a natural function. It is the way God made man and woman and why he devised Christian marriage."

Lewis thought of the millions upon millions of people living outside of Christian marriage.

"That doctrine puts women very much at the mercy of men."

"Control and abstinence and devotion have their places in men's lives."

Again Lewis was silent and questioning.

"You must consider these matters more as they

affect you and not in their general application, Mr. Sanford." There was a smile on the priest's face as he said that, a friendly smile which seemed to be kind without illusion and without flexibility. "It is quite a storm," he added.

The wind and rain were clattering at the windows now and the housekeeper could be seen through the uncurtained doorway, laying a cloth on the dining-room table.

"I've stayed too long," apologized Lewis.

"No. And you must come again. We have other things to talk about."

"Indeed I shall come," said Lewis.

He told Marie that night that he had seen her priest.

"Did it bother you?" she asked.

"No. But, my dear, how hard the Church makes the world for you women!"

"If the world's hard, it's not because of the Church. It just tells you what's right to do."

He thought of that abstract right, those doctrines he had heard of unwearying fidelity, uncomplaining motherhood, submission translated into glorification.

"Of course it depends on whom you marry," said Marie, and brought herself into his arms.

"My darling, my darling, I think I must take better care of you than your Church does," he murmured.

And it did not occur to him that he had just promised not to interfere.

There was another formal interview which concerned Marie, but it was less tempered by mutual respect and sympathy. Jeffrey had rather insisted on it. He had suggested that Lewis come to see him at his office, and somewhat reluctantly Lewis had gone, feeling that there was no use in being too squeamish. Jeffrey received him with great cordiality.

"And so you're going to walk off with our lovely girl, are you?" asked Jeffrey.

Lewis wished, as he answered, that he hadn't heard quite so much about this suave, rather handsome man. He's far too clever to be crooked himself, he thought. He just sets the machinery in motion.

"Well, you're getting a wonderful girl. It's not everyone who really knows Marie. When you do, you find she's pure gold. Pure gold." He paused, perhaps because that last word brought up a little too abruptly the subject which he intended to discuss. "Where are you planning to live? Or are you going on one of these indefinite, ten-year honeymoons?"

"We'll live right here," said Lewis. "I think we'll go away for a short trip. But of course the summer is my busy season."

"How do you think you're coming out with your experiments?"

"Oh, it can be done. It's a question of whether it can be made profitable enough to interest capital. The whole thing is going to hinge ultimately on what we can do to reduce taxes. I wish we could get some of these legislators educated up to the fact that they've got this country by the throat and are squeezing the life out of it. Maybe we can do it before the next legislature meets."

"I guess the only education some of them understand is cold cash," said Jeffrey, with his hard chuckle. "I know a man down there who's got a list of every man in the House and across from his name is his price. Calls it his wine list!"

"I don't think that gets us anywhere. There's been too much of that kind of trading. They've got to be made to realize the situation. They've got to see that they're putting valuable property into bankruptcy. It's no good bribing them. That's what's left us where we are."

Jeffrey did not want to argue it.

"There's been a lot of good money thrown away," he remarked and changed the subject. "Well, you and Marie want to take plenty of time to enjoy yourself. A man doesn't get married every day. Where do you expect to live when you get back?"

"I think we'll build ourselves a place."

"Poor investment," said Jeffrey. "You'll never get your money out."

"I wasn't thinking of it as an investment."

"It's a hard climate, too. Still, I suppose you'll have another place in Florida or California."

"I'm not rich enough," Lewis answered, smiling.

Jeffrey gave him a shrewd glance.

"Two fortunes are better than one," he remarked. "Marie's a very rich girl."

"I suppose she is."

"Of course it's pretty well tied up. She has her responsibilities. Tremendous income tax, you know—penalty of being rich. But where Marie is in better shape than most of the people interested in mining is that she is both fee-owner and interested in some of the operating companies. Being fee-owner she escapes some of the taxes, anyway. Her father left her a large estate. I have, as you know, acted as her lawyer and trustee—with the Second National Bank as co-trustee. Her property has grown in value. It has heavy expenses, of course, as all fortunes have. And it has, I may say, been a great responsibility since the death of Marie's mother."

"I suppose it has," said Lewis, without sympathy.

"Yes. I've given up most of my time to the handling of that estate. It's very involved. Now, I don't know how Marie wants to arrange things after her marriage. She has, as you know, been of age for some years but she's never looked into the business end of her own affairs very carefully. I thought I'd just ask you to drop in and talk things over."

There they were, all his cards on the table.

And yet not quite all. He pursued his subject thoughtfully.

"As I say, it's very involved. Any sudden change of control might be disturbing."

Lewis let him go no further.

"I have not talked these things over with Marie to any extent, Mr. Jeffrey. I told her, as I would have told any woman whom I asked to marry me, that I am well able to support her. As to her personal fortune, her own estate, no doubt she is entirely content to have you continue to handle it for her. The matter lies between you and her, as it has in the past. If at any future time Marie needs or seeks my advice, I shall always be glad to give it. But my marriage with Marie is a matter of putting my estate at her disposal and not of assuming any control over hers."

"Of course. Of course," said Jeffrey. "I understand how you feel. Very wise, very sensible point of view. But I am sure that Marie wants you to be informed as to what her holdings are. In fact, she said as much to me. It's only right. If anything should happen to me, she'd turn to you."

"I'll do anything necessary," said Lewis.

"We must have a talk or two," Jeffrey told him, with a manner of great confidence.

So the priest had said. There were times, after all those talks, so different in temper and in matter, when Lewis felt strange. He had known that Marie

was rich. But as he went over her affairs rather sketchily with her stepfather, he was surprised and rather aghast. There was more money than any woman could use. There was money past the point of personal need, or indulgence, or luxury, or even desire. There was money which was only an obligation, money which was only mighty. Sometimes this rich woman, this girl whose very name suggested money to so many people, did not seem to belong to him. Sometimes his bride, formalized by her Church, offered to him by the Church with conditions and reservations, did not seem the person he loved. But that was only when he was away from her, when Father Carroll spoke of her in that curiously impersonal way as an instrument of marriage, or when Jeffrey spoke of her as if she were a treasury.

Then he would see her, and all that would fade. She was desire and tenderness. She was imagination and beauty. She could set his body on fire and consume him with restlessness. But she could offer him the deepest peace he had ever known. He loved to touch her. When he could feel the rise of passion in her as her lips were upon his, there was joy and pride in his heart. There were times in the day when he would suddenly recall something about her —a look, a dress she had worn, a word—and he would find thinking about her so sweet a drug that he longed for solitude or for darkness that he might

let it have its way. He loved the dignity in which she seemed to walk, and her mind, which had no petty quarrels. That was Marie, the Marie who was essential and inevitable and beloved.

Deborah said: "You mean you go to see the priest? Is that one of the things you have to do?"

"He's a very intelligent man," answered Lewis. "You should see if you can't get him for dinner some day. He has the kind of mind you'd enjoy. Not that you'd agree with him. But don't wear that scarlet chiffon you've got on. Remember he's an ascetic."

"Don't ascetics usually find scarlet stimulating? If only to shudder away from?"

"He wouldn't. He would regard you, even you, Deborah, not so much as a woman as part of the mosaic of womankind. To him you would not be an individual. You would be a good wife, a good mother —and there, my dear girl, you stop."

"But I don't," said Deborah.

"You certainly don't seem to," agreed Lewis. "But sometimes I find myself fascinated by the simplicities of dogma. It does all your thinking for you so smoothly."

"It couldn't do mine."

"Oh, I don't know."

"Does it do all Marie's thinking?"

"Of course not!" he said, almost sharply, and then wondered why that had stung him like a challenge.

Chapter Seven

THERE WAS NOTHING that Marie ever regretted about her wedding-night, nothing that ever brought a blush to her memory or one of those half-silly, half-disillusioned smiles with which so many women recall how reality can destroy romance at one encounter. The things that Nellie Muldeen had said about marriage—and she had been apt to say things before Marie could prevent her—were proven untrue. They had nothing to do with the way devotion could rise to passion, gaze unblinded on ecstasy, and return without shock or break into intimacy which had reserves even in its familiarity and was gay with easy humor. She had been braced against coarseness in spite of her love for Lewis. If that was inherent in marriage she had been prepared to accept it. There had been none. But she had never dreamed that, in those first few weeks, her own love could grow into something so demanding, so vivifying, so splendidly intense that she seemed to have just begun to live.

She could not give enough. She had no trick of withdrawal. She had yielded to Lewis with a com-

pleteness and lack of coquetry that made him adore her. And she had been—and remained—so beautiful and so innocent in her scant patchwork of knowledge about the relations of men and women that he had been reverent in teaching her more.

"I wonder if I am as beautiful as you think," she said.

"There was never a more beautiful body in the world," he answered, "and I take small stock in angels."

"Of course I've always known I was pretty. But sometimes that doesn't seem to do a person much good. It never seemed to me that most girls like you as well if you happen to be better-looking than they are. Or women. It's almost as if they suspect you. And it's not enough to be good-looking and let it go at that. It's a lot of work."

"Lazy sloven."

"I'm not. I spent a winter in Paris learning about clothes and things. Perfumes. When not to wear them, mostly. How to leave my hair alone. I went partly because Deborah and people like her made me feel like the kind of picture you see on calendars that grocers send out."

"I've seen very handsome women on those calendars."

"Would you have married one of them? Would you have married me if I looked like a calendar?"

"Like a shot."

"You wouldn't even have noticed me," she told him. "I'd have been pretty. I'd have had exactly the same body, but you wouldn't have known it."

"I'd have found you. I'd have taken you, red cheeks and smile *glacé* and pompadour and calendar and all. But you wouldn't have noticed me. You'd have had your eye on some smart young salesman. Some butcher. Why do you love me, Marie? I've a rotten memory."

"Because you're my husband," she said.

"But suppose I weren't."

"Then I wouldn't love you—like this."

"I would be just the same."

"No," she said, very seriously, "you wouldn't."

"Would you love any husband you happened to marry?"

"Foolish ——"

But for a moment he wondered about that. She loved him—no doubt of that—but she loved their relationship and him because of it. So did he, of course, but still—married or not ——

"I want to be loved as a person, young woman, not as a husband."

"If you were just a person you wouldn't be here with me. I couldn't feel like this."

"But people do, all the time."

"But they shouldn't, poor things."

"What can they do if they care for each other and can't manage to marry?"

"I wonder if the fact that they care for each other shouldn't make it less a sin," she said, dreamily.

He held her close. There were times when his secret tenderness was almost more than his senses could bear.

"There's the moon through the window. Back again. It was there last night," said Marie.

"Do you think that moon cares in the least whether we're married or not?" he murmured into her hair.

"But God does. And it's His moon," she answered.

He always remembered that moon. It had come through the square windows of the country hotel where they were staying. They had gone on an unplotted wedding-trip through some of the Eastern seaboard states, driving in their own car, stopping whenever the mood came over them, tasting their companionship in unknown places and spending one night in a city and the next in a small town. The hotel of that conversation was a commonplace one, but it was clean and they had been incredibly happy. It was when they were looking over the road maps next morning that Marie spoke of Philadelphia.

"You know I ought to stop there and see my relatives."

"You ought? Do you like them?"

"They're almost all I have since my mother's aunt died. This is my father's brother and his wife. I met them in Paris. They're pleasant. Old, you know. They'd like you."

"Do you really want to see them?"

"I'd like to see where my father came from," said Marie. "I don't mean just the city. But the kind of place he left when he went out to Carmine. You know what it's like out there now. Well, it was just nothing when he went out. And he never went back to Philadelphia, my mother told me once. She didn't know his family at all. That was their doing, I suppose. There was some kind of break, but when I met this aunt and uncle in Paris they were perfectly cordial."

"I should imagine they might be."

"They took me about with them a lot. And they asked me to come and stay with them in Philadelphia."

"They needn't begin asking things like that now," said Lewis. "I hate to give up an hour to them. But still, I suppose it would interest you. We could make it in half a day. Suppose we wire—or better yet get them on the telephone. For all you know they may be in Europe again."

They were not. They were in town for a day or two and going back to their place in the country on Thursday. Mrs. Hawley was delighted to hear that Marie was so near, insistent on her spending a week-end.

"We can wait for you here and drive you out," she urged.

Lewis made signs to his wife not to get too deeply involved in hospitality.

"I get more unwilling to share you every day," he said when she had hung up the receiver after promising a two-day visit. "I'm getting to such a state of possession that I'm miserly."

"You'll be all right when you go to work again."

"Wait and see."

They started off in high spirits. It was a bright summer day, with a touch of wind, and the car was open to it. The people on the hotel porch stared at Lewis and his wife. They were handsome, they appeared seasoned to wealth and enjoyment, and no one could look at them twice without realizing that they were in love. Out of their disappointments and difficulties and imperfections people stared at the obvious luck of the two in the green automobile, luck beyond the common range of hope.

They had passed through half a dozen little towns and long stretches of country when Marie saw the church with its flat gilded cross.

"Look," she said, "there's a church."

"Not a very pretty one."

"It's a Catholic one. There's the cross."

The church was small and hard of outline, built of common brown brick. Lewis looked at it without admiration.

"Stop a minute," said Marie. "I'd like to go in."

"In there? Why?"

"It's a special devotion to visit strange churches," she said.

He stopped a little reluctantly because it was growing hot now and they should be speeding if they were to come to a roadhouse where they could get a good luncheon. Then because he was instantly sorry for his hesitation, he turned the ignition key and followed her. She had already disappeared inside the shiny oak door.

The interior of the church seemed to Lewis to be even worse. Windows badly shaded by colored glass, and a hot sun coming in through the red panes to expose over-varnished pews and statues that stood about the front of the church in stiff attitudes. Horrible anatomy in those things, thought Lewis, standing at the back and looking at them. Marie had gone to the front of the church, bent in her swift, graceful genuflection, and was on her knees before the altar.

It was a small altar and it was massed with flowers that were obviously wax—gaudy, magenta roses, odorless carnations. A crucifix hung above the little tabernacle, with a suffering figure upon it. Why must they surround themselves with so much suffering? thought Lewis, looking from the crucifix to the Stations of the Cross, hung at intervals along the walls. Suffering and ugliness.

He thought of how simple it would be to have a small white church, real flowers on the altar instead of those waxen monstrosities, a place calling for wor-

ship, with one beautiful statue, perhaps, or one beautiful copy of some ancient picture. Something in him protested against seeing Marie worship in a place like this, protested again as she came down the aisle toward him, dipped her hand in the font of water and made the sign of the cross.

"You know," she said, as they started on, "it's a good thing to go into strange churches. They always used to tell me that you could pray for three intentions and they would be granted."

"Did you ask for a black pudding?" he asked, in amusement, "a black pudding to hang on the end of my nose?"

"What do you mean?"

"It's the fairy tale. In the fairy tale they always ask for three wishes."

"These aren't wishes. They're prayers."

"But you get them granted under the proper conditions."

"Yes."

"What a superstitious child you are!"

"I'm not superstitious."

"You're not? And you really believe that your particular god ——"

"God ——" she said, correcting him.

"God—as great as that—is watching for you to go into ugly little brown brick churches to pray, and that if you pray in a special place you'll get what you

might not in another? Why, darling, it's the rankest superstition!"

"Prayers aren't superstitions. They can't be."

"So the heathen think about their wood and stone."

He was wishing that he could let it alone now. He didn't want to go further into argument. But sometimes the stubborn intellectualism in him would persist, insisting on its own way. He had to share that with her, too.

"It doesn't matter," she said, after a moment, "whether the church is an ugly little brown one or not. If the Blessed Sacrament is there."

"I'm sorry, darling."

She leaned on the edge of the car window and watched the farms skim by until he asked, "What were your three prayers?"

"My intentions? One was for my mother. She hated the thought of purgatory so, and often I have a feeling that she starves for prayers that I forget to say. And only prayers can help her, of course."

"I've never understood your purgatory very well."

"It's a state of not being with God. Just denial. That's why it's suffering. But there's hope, you see, that some day heaven can be attained. They used to teach us about the contemplative Orders. There was one called the 'Convent of the Sleepless Nights,' where they pray all through the night, every night, for the world, for souls in torment. It's very won-

derful. And there are convents so devout that you never can see the nuns. Not the cloistered teaching Orders like the one that had our school. But convents where they spend all their time praying and meditating and only speak to visitors through gratings."

It seemed to Lewis that the very thought was like a morbid shadow on this sun-warmed day, with the fields golden and fertile and nature in command of its own. But he did not say so.

"And my other two intentions were for us," said Marie.

"What did you ask for us?"

"No—I shan't tell you."

He took his hand from the wheel so that he might lift hers to his lips.

"You don't need to. I know."

For a while neither of them wanted to speak.

Lewis had not guessed at the temper or habits of these Philadelphia Hawleys. He had not thought much about them, but vaguely he expected to meet a well-bred, very probably tiresome old couple from whose attentions he and Marie would escape as soon as possible. It rather surprised him to step into the kind of group with which he had been associated all his life. To a large extent it was even the same group, or ramifications of it. There was David Silliman, who was one of the men he had known very well at Yale and who had married the daughter of some people

who lived across the street from the Hawleys. There were the Prindles, who were connected with the Yorks and who had visited at the Fairbanks house in St. Anthony and had met Deborah there. Elsie Prindle was a close friend of Charlotte Fairbanks and wanted to exchange anecdotes about her at once. She had gone with Charlotte on her astonishing African trip. The Hawleys gave a dinner for Marie and her husband on the night after they arrived, and had asked the company with great care. The old people were altogether delighted with Lewis Sanford. It was so pleasant to have this altogether attractive niece choose a husband who was not only a social asset but very personable and charming. The dinner was one of the most spirited ones that Mr. and Mrs. Hawley had been able to have in a long time, for they rarely had so good an excuse for entertaining young people. Their old house seemed to take on a new glow that night. It was not because of the champagne or the delicious cocktails, but because youth had come back to it, youth in its own direct line, youth to which it had a blood claim.

Marie, in a long, trailing dress of ivory-colored lace, was very beautiful. But the men, after that first glance of wonder at another man's luck in finding a woman so lovely, had not found a great deal to talk to her about. They fell short of subjects after using up the casual, detached ones common among strangers. If fact led to opinion, Marie had little to

say; and she lacked entirely the ability to stir a man's pulses for an hour or two by pretending an interest or allowing an intimacy which was deliberately artificial. Unmarried, she might have stimulated any of the men by her beauty alone. But now that beauty was obviously held in trust.

As for Marie, she found much to interest her. The old rooms with their high ceilings and bowed windows, the expensive elegance of the furnishings, the feeling the whole house gave of being an accumulation of time and human relationships, the family silver which Mrs. Hawley took such pleasure in showing her, the ugly portraits of dressed-up people all had some connection with her father. This had been her grandfather's house. Her father must have been brought up here, gone up and down the circular staircase hundreds of times, eaten at this very table. She thought of that powerful, coarsened figure which she could remember and looked again at the painting of two boys with their mother. Her father had been one of those boys and the other the white-haired man across the room. It didn't seem possible.

"Speaking of important people, the most important one I ever saw was the butler the Hawleys used to have. The one who used to be a coachman."

"We had to make him a butler. He couldn't condescend to automobiles," said Mr. Hawley, "but his presence was always better than his services. It's usually so with the important."

"I always used to confuse him with the bishop."

And Lewis was saying to Elsie Prindle: "The thing about Charlotte is that she's really a crusader at heart. She mocks at people, especially women, but really she's suffering over them, horrified at the way they fail her. If she weren't too intelligent, she'd be a reformer. As it is, the best she can do is to analyze and take chilly comfort in having no delusions."

"I think it's a frightful pity she's so clever," said Elsie. "She scares men off so. And she's really quite emotional. I think she'd be entirely different if she were married. I was always awfully fond of her."

"So are we all," answered Lewis.

He spoke somewhat absently, for at the moment he happened to see his wife, who was listening to some story of Dave Silliman's, and the curved delicacy of her throat brought back a memory that had hardly had time to become a memory. He was glad that they had come here to see her people. It told him still more about her. It satisfied some subconscious instinct to find that back of Marie, helping to make her what she was, there had been people of intelligence and education and that among them was her natural environment.

But she did not seem to think so. When the guests had left and the plans for the week-end been approved—for they were going with the Hawleys to their country place—when Marie's aunt and uncle,

after many cordial, hospitable suggestions ranging from highballs to hot milk, had gone to bed, he found that she did not think so at all.

"This place reminds me of my mother's old house," he said. "Don't you think so?"

"Yes. So much."

"Queer to run into all these people who know our friends. And yet it always happens. There's a kind of loose tie-up, all over the country, of people who, if they don't know one another, easily might. They're always tumbling over mutual acquaintances. In the army it happened all the time. It's curious in a way, in such a large country. The colleges have something to do with it, of course, and then there's a weaving of social life and finance between city and city. Sometimes it's a nuisance. But it worked out all right tonight. We were certainly among friends."

"I wasn't," said Marie.

He had been talking casually, but her answer caught him up.

"Don't you like them, dear?"

"I didn't mean that. But I really don't seem to belong, the way you do. I had a strange feeling of visiting your people, not mine. I know I'm related to the Hawleys, but it doesn't seem to come true. I don't belong."

"You can't help it. You do."

"My father stepped out of all this before he married my mother."

"But you do look like that picture of your Hawley grandmother," he said, teasingly.

"The Hawleys did something to my looks," Marie remarked, "but they didn't get inside. That's different. It's more like my mother and her family. I don't know why. But I don't feel intimate with any of these people. Now with my aunt in Carmine, you know, the one I took you to see one day, I did feel intimate. Not that I liked her much. She never was a very pleasant person."

Lewis remembered that visit to the aunt who was the sister of Marie's mother. He remembered the aunt's uncertain manners, too regal, too humble, and that faintly suspicious air. He had not forgotten the room she lay in, for she was an invalid, with the drawn shades, odors of sickness, mournful religious pictures on the walls, and cluttered furniture.

"You know, Marie, I think you're tired tonight. I'm glad we're going to have a day or two in the country. We'll get some swimming and you must sleep. I've not been giving you any chance to rest."

"I'm not tired."

"Or, if you don't want to go on with the plans for this week-end, we can duck it in a minute. Why don't we?"

"Oh no! I like it here. I didn't mean that I was uncomfortable or unhappy, but only that I don't fit in."

"You fit in anywhere," said Lewis, coming over to her, "but best of all in my arms."

"That's what I care most about," she answered, in one of those rising moods of passion which she was learning to free.

Chapter Eight

THE HAWLEY COUNTRY house had been a heritage. It had belonged to Mrs. Hawley's family and it was an old house, carefully modernized, but keeping plenty of lake and orchard and even farm to make sure that in spite of its luxury it was country. Mr. Hawley took a gentleman's interest in cattle. The butler always came down ahead of any party to properly simplify the service. The bedspreads were cotton instead of silk and lace, the china brighter and heavier than that in the town house. But there was no lapse or deterioration in comfort. All the country diversions were provided for and half a dozen guests besides Marie and Lewis had come down for a day or two, and others motored or rode over from neighboring country places. Marie, relaxed in one of the peacock chairs on the veranda, or poised on a diving-board, was a picture to remember. She was the center of everything. And yet Dave Silliman put the question to Elsie Prindle.

"Do you get anywhere with that girl?"

"Marie Sanford? Not so very far."

"Funny, isn't it? It starts off all right."

"Of course she's in love."

"That's all right. I've seen plenty of girls in love. I like them that way. But is she just dumb?"

"No dumb girl could dress like that. She has superb taste. But I do find myself thinking up things to talk about to her."

"Exactly," said David. "Why? She's been about a lot. Where did she go to school?"

"Convent."

"Oh, is she a Roman Catholic?"

"Didn't you know that?"

"Sanford's not."

"Well, she is."

"I guess I'll have to open up on the Pope," said David, "next time I talk to her."

She was a Catholic, and on Sunday morning that meant she would go to church. No one, it appeared, had thought of that. Church was not one of the country occupations. But Marie had asked one of the maids and found out where the nearest Catholic church was.

"But, darling," said Lewis, "must you really go?"

They had been having a late breakfast on the terrace, a breakfast at which guests appeared when they chose.

"And what's more, I must hurry. The last mass is at eleven."

"But it's nearly that now."

"Is it really? I'll have to rush. I should have gone to an early service."

"We got up quite early enough," said Lewis, fondly. "But it's so late that you'd really better let it go. We're driving over to the Silliman place for lunch and we want to get some swimming before we start. Why don't you say your prayers here for once?"

"I can't do that. It would be a mortal sin."

"I wonder—on such a nice day," said Lewis. "How far away is the church?"

"Six miles. In that town we came through on the way down where we stopped for gas."

"I'll drive you over."

"I can take the car and go by myself."

"No. I'm going with you. I'd like to. I can't spare you this morning. And maybe it will raise my spiritual level."

But all the same he felt that it was rather a foolish expedition. It confused everything. Mr. and Mrs. Hawley were so disturbed that they had not thought of this. The swimming party was broken up. The luncheon hour was made a little later after some hurried telephoning. And all for the sake of a scant ten minutes in the vestibule of a church.

For the place was crowded when they got there. Automobiles clustered in bunches up and down the wide country road. A good many summer residents evidently came to this service. The church door stood

open and at the back of the church a number of people who could not find seats were at prayer on the bare floor. A fat man in golf clothes knelt uncomfortably on one knee, breathing heavily. Marie knelt down beside him, her gold rosary beads in her hand. Lewis, somewhat self-conscious, stood behind her.

Everything was unintelligible and seemed hurried. There were bells, bowed heads, a foreign-looking priest turning from the altar and back again to it. In ten minutes the congregation murmured the responses to some prayers he said aloud and then streamed through the doors. They did not seem deeply religious. It's just a matter of form with most of them, thought Lewis.

"Is that all?" he asked Marie, incredulously. "It didn't last long."

"It was a low mass," she said; "that's why it was so short. I had no idea that there wouldn't be a high one."

"Well, was it worth the trip?" he inquired, quizzically.

"Why, of course! I was there for the Consecration. I heard mass. Of course it was too bad to be late. But it isn't a sin under those circumstances."

The crowd streamed around them. Lewis got his car out of the tight parking place it was in and, as he did so, struck a fender of the car ahead, whose driver went into a fury at the damage. Lewis ex-

plained that he was a traveler and that he couldn't take time for an adjustment. He was sorry and willing to pay for the torn fender on the small car. The man named an exorbitant sum. Lewis found himself involved in angry altercation and it was fifteen minutes before they started down the road back to the Hawley estate.

"Well, that trip wasn't worth much to either of us."

"I got to church."

The repetition seemed to annoy Lewis.

"Marie, do you really call that going to church? You couldn't have prayed much in that ten minutes on the floor. Wasn't it just a matter of the letter of the law? Of getting by?"

"You don't understand."

"You can't say that the man I ran into was much improved by his devotions. He certainly was a crooked bird. And foul-mouthed, too."

"Wasn't he?"

"I'm going to step on it," said Lewis. "We still have time for a swim. And I don't feel much edified."

He could tell she had gone into her own belief, was shut into it, away from him. Sometimes she seemed to do that, to withdraw spiritually, and once or twice already he had felt a curious desire to force an entrance to the place where her beliefs were locked and which was impregnable to his reason. But now, as the car rushed along through the summer

day, heavy with sweet clover scents, passive in its Sunday stillness, the taste of life again became delicious.

Old Mr. Hawley did not find Marie so difficult to talk to. It was she who introduced a subject that evening when they happened to be together. He had taken her down to his model dairy and they were walking back to the house.

"Did my father ever come here?" she asked, looking up at the great trees that bordered the driveway.

"Oh yes."

"I wonder why he went West."

Mr. Hawley was a prim old gentleman, but his values were clear and his memory unsentimental and excellent. He recalled very clearly a visit that his brother had made to this very house, and his own wife, then a young woman, making a scene about it. She had been outraged when Fred turned up one Sunday afternoon with his exceedingly gay friends, two of them only technically ladies. "I won't stay under the same roof!" she had threatened. "It's a living disgrace!"

"I suppose, my dear, it must have been a sense of adventure. Horace Greeley was telling the young men to go West about that time. Unconquered country, you know, always has its lure for a spirited young man."

That was what he told Marie even as his mind

went over with some amusement the way he had managed to get Fred and his friends down to the village hotel for the night and back to the city next day. There had been some necessary collusion with the young ladies. One of them had been very pretty. Over all the years which had intervened old Mr. Hawley smiled to himself at the memory of what that nameless girl had said to him.

"You never saw my father after he left Philadelphia, did you?"

"No, my dear, I didn't. I always meant to go out West and look him up. But the years have a way of tricking us. I know that he made a most respected place for himself out there."

Marie had her own pictures. But just as Mr. Hawley saw no need to tell her what kind of man her father had been, she saw no reason to tell what kind of man he had become.

"He wasn't afraid of anything," she told her uncle. "He used to be proud of that. And he nearly always got what he wanted, no matter whether other people wanted to give it to him or not. He had to struggle to hold some of his land. I can remember the lawsuits when I was a little girl. But wasn't it strange that he never came back here?"

"Where his home is, and his family, a man is usually content to stay," said Mr. Hawley, somewhat sententiously.

He thought of his wife's fear that Fred might

turn up, in that brazen way he had when he was drunk. Marie thought of the home in which her father so often did not stay. She remembered her mother, worried and tearful, terribly responsible for her father, living in dread of him and in pride of him.

"How old were you when you lost your father, Marie?"

"Fifteen."

"Yes, you must have been. You remember him clearly, of course."

"Very clearly. Sometimes he seems more vivid than my mother."

"Your father would be glad to see what a fine young man you've married."

"You think he would?"

It was impossible for Marie to imagine a meeting between her father and Lewis. They were the only two men who had ever really captured her imagination, but she could see nothing in common between them.

"Of course. You've made a splendid choice. An intellectual man of good family, breeding, high standing."

"My father didn't care anything about those things."

Mr. Hawley looked at her curiously. He was about to protest, when the words stuck in his throat. She was entirely right. Fred had always hit those

things squarely in the face whenever they confronted him. It was wits and courage that had interested him, not education, vitality and not breeding.

"But you do," he said, after a pause. "You care for those things."

"I care for Lewis."

"It's the same thing, isn't it?"

But as they walked the rest of the way back to the house that remained a question.

BOOK THREE

Chapter Nine

THERE WERE DAYS IN midsummer when Carmine seemed to have no shadows. No trees, thick with foliage, protected dark, cool places. The sparse, crippled growth of spruce and pine offered no refuge, and along strips of cement and withering grass the sun outlined the thin shapes of maple and boxwood saplings as if in mockery. Where the pavements ended, the roads which had red ore dust mixed in their composition were the very color of intolerable heat. It was still, dry, bright without beauty. Work went on because it was harnessed to a schedule, but initiative was gone. People thought only of relief and matched their endurance against it.

Such cool places as could be found were usually out of reach of both sun and air—in basements, in motion-picture theaters which were artificially lit and ventilated, in sour speakeasies, in the caves of mines. The children who tried to play in the yards around little frame houses on the edges of the streets did not tan like healthy children in sunlight. They thinned and often wore the pallor of exhaus-

tion and were fretful. It was a fretfulness that in their elders became anger and inarticulate resentment at the prodigious, uncomfortable burden that living had become.

Ice was expensive. A stream of people went in and out of the soft-drink parlors, trying to refresh themselves with the sickly, chilled sweetness of ice-cream mixtures. There was no real beer, but plenty of moonshine was to be had, and in the parched days of late August drunkenness increased. The police station was crowded, as was the children's hospital, which had been erected by the mining companies and furnished through the generosity of young Mrs. Sanford.

The families of the company officials went away from the hot little town, to lakes and summer resorts or to visit relatives who lived in cooler places. Only those who must remained. Superintendents and engineers who were obliged to stay on the ground stirred up what breeze they could by speeding their high-powered cars, and often drove down to the city seventy miles south, where Lake Superior lay always cool and vast, with mammoth freight boats moving across it. They went there for orders as well as diversion, for the directing officers of the mining companies were all headquartered in the city, and the great steel mills which absorbed so much of the output of ore towered on its outskirts. Martin Jeffrey had offices in the city and kept a room at the most

exclusive men's club at his disposal, although he still voted in Carmine and maintained his residence there. That was a matter of policy with him, a leaf out of the book of Fred Hawley, perhaps. In Carmine and all the other mining towns the basis of existence was ore. In the Twin Ports it was steel. There were grain-handling and manufacturing there, too, but the steel industry and the financing of the mining organizations were the backbone of the city. A stream of capital, pooled at a common source, flowed through the greatest mining companies, their subsidiary railroads, and the steel mills. There were a few independent operators, but the extent of their independence and of their financial security was always doubtful.

On one of those late August nights, when Carmine lay panting and exhausted in the heat, the yacht club of the Twin Ports was quite at its best. William B. Sadler, the general counsel of one of the railroads, was entertaining at dinner there. He was a hard old man, with few human tolerances, but he loved beauty, particularly when it made no claims upon him. As he stood at the window of the lounge tonight and looked across the mighty harbor he could see the ore docks miles away, their flares sparkling in the row of lights which was always called the diamond necklace. He knew there were few fairer sights in the world and he had seen many of the show places of beauty. The poorest and most scape-

grace of boats was magnificent tonight. Motion and light made them magic as they moved across the lake and, beneath the windows of the club, pleasure boats grew restless at their moorings.

"I seem to be your first guest," said Deborah Hale, coming up behind him.

He turned to greet her with unembarrassed affection, the fine feeling of an older man for a young woman when it is not clogged with desire.

"That's the way I like to have it. Always be the first to come and the last to go, Deborah, when you're a guest of mine."

"Were you thinking poetry?" she asked, sharing his view.

"No. I was thinking, in halting prose, that it's a fine night."

"It is down here. But it's frightful on the range. Hot as the devil's own oven. I hated to leave Tim. I stopped in at his office for a minute and he looked as if he were melting."

"Couldn't he break away?"

"Oh, he could, I suppose. But he thinks it's bad for the morale of the organization to have the superintendents all run away from the heat. I think he's right about it. Don't you?"

"A little heat won't hurt him. And as long as he sent you, it's all right."

"I feel conscience-smitten at being so cool. So many people aren't cool tonight."

"That's a sentimental indulgence, isn't it? To sorrow in comfort for the discomfort of others?"

"Sentimental to be sorry that things are so unfair?"

He looked amused.

"Who ever promised anything else to this world, anyway? Besides, a good deal of this suffering from heat—or cold—is a matter of imagination. And the people you're pitying aren't very imaginative or highly organized, you know. They take things as they come—they have to."

"I know. That's always the answer," said Deborah. "You see them turned off when the mines shut down, see them standing around the streets looking blank and impenetrable, and the thing you're told to remember is that they really don't take things as we do. I find that hard to believe."

"You're a dreamer," said Sadler.

"No, I'm not. I'm very impatient with dreams. I'm impatient with my sister-in-law, for example, when she buys a marble altar and stained-glass windows for a church even though she knows that a lot of the congregation haven't had enough to eat. That's dreaming, to my mind. Looking after the theoretical soul while the body goes hungry."

"She doesn't believe that the soul's theoretical, perhaps."

"No. She's a Roman Catholic, you know."

"I know she is. I admire her greatly. She's coming

tonight. But I've always wondered—not that it's any of my business—at the extraordinary combination of temperaments which she and Lewis present."

"How can anyone help but wonder? It's not my business, either. But sometimes it seems to me as if Lewis had deliberately closed off certain sections of his mind—or his thought, at least. He's so very tolerant of things—like the fish-on-Friday superstition, for example."

"Superstition?"

"Supposing a God—for the sake of argument," said Deborah, "do you imagine He is particularly interested in the diet of human beings?"

"No doubt she looks at it quite differently."

"She does, I'm sure. But still Lewis must find it queer, to be so close to that kind of dogma. There are all sorts of things: Books that mustn't be read. That curious, almost frightened reverence for priests, even obscure foreign ones. That terrible intimacy of the confessional. I can't imagine it, can you? Think of telling all sorts of personal things to a practically strange man. I should think that would make Lewis ——" She stopped and laughed at herself. "Didn't I say it was none of my business? And here I go talking about it. But I always do overtalk to you, Bill."

"It's one of my few privileges," he said, "that you will talk to me. As for what you're talking about,

it's the curiosity outsiders have always felt for the deliberately mysterious Roman Church."

"I suppose. It baffles you, just as Marie does. Don't think for a minute that I'm not fond of her. I am. But after a year and a half of being her sister-in-law, of living close together up there, of knowing each other really very well, I often feel I'm just where I started from with her. Isn't it queer?"

"Lewis seems happy," said Sadler.

"I think he is. And happy or not, he's very much in love with her," answered Deborah.

"She's a beautiful woman."

"And gets more so all the time."

"They didn't come down with you today?"

"No. Lewis and Marie came down yesterday with the baby and the nurse. They wanted to have him looked over. They're staying at the hotel and I'm spending the night with old Mrs. Payton, unless Tim comes in and drives me back. Oh, here they are. Here comes everybody all at once, apparently."

Mr. Sadler, greeting his guests, noted that Deborah had been right, as usual. There was a deepening of loveliness in Marie Sanford. It was impossible to take her beauty for granted, not remark it anew. Tonight, in a pale-green dress she was as lovely a picture as he had ever seen her. He noticed, too, the attention her husband paid her.

That fellow is thinking of his wife all the time,

thought Bill Sadler. Or has something just happened between them?

Both speculations were accurate. Lewis was thinking only of his wife as he talked to Lucy Everett and asked her all the questions that would bridge a lapsed and neglected acquaintance. His mind was full of unsettled questions, matters not finally arranged. They would not let him alone and yet he did not see what he could or should do about them.

They had seen the child specialist, who had assured them that the baby was in excellent condition. Then they had seen Marie's doctor and had her belief, that she was to have another child in the course of six or seven months, confirmed. The doctor had told Lewis, talking to him privately, that it was rather unfortunately soon after the first birth, which had not been simple. But with care no doubt everything would be satisfactory.

Marie had said very little when they came out of the doctor's office. It was the conversation at the hotel afterward which haunted him.

He had been tender.

"I'm sorry that you have to go through all this again so soon, darling."

"I hate the thickness," she said, "and the heaviness. Not the pain so much."

He looked at her helplessly. She was so slim and lovely and nature did not care.

"You must let me take better care of you, Marie," he told her, gravely.

"Better care? Well, you tried. It was my fault, too."

"Not a fault," he said, quickly.

He knew what she meant. He remembered all about it. He remembered how passion had crept over restraint. In that lovemaking which demanded everything, which was fed by memory and lit by anticipation, in that secret, splendid hour there had been no fault. It had been too natural, too human. And it would happen again.

He went on.

"We mustn't think of it that way at all. But you must be protected. You must listen to reason. There are ways—and plenty of them."

"You know I think those things are wrong," she said. And then suddenly, with a kind of desperation, she turned on him. "But I can't go on having child after child after child for fifteen or twenty years!"

"Of course you can't! It's utterly unreasonable. And you shan't. I shall simply see that you don't."

Their eyes met. They were close, facing the very secret of life. And yet Lewis had the feeling he sometimes had of not being quite alone with her.

"It's a sin," she answered; "you can't get away from it, Lewis."

"It's not a sin. Darling, you've just had a child. We'll have more, I hope—if you want them. But

there's no sin in using a little sense in spacing their births. As far as that goes, if contraception is wrong, it logically goes back of its mechanics. If we don't want a child at a certain time the contraception is there, no matter what you do or don't do. Sin's always mental. Your church teaches that."

He wasn't sure she was listening. And he was so sorry for her. His own futile responsibility harassed him. He took her in his arms.

"You've got to let me care for you properly."

She shivered.

"I want to be good, Lewis," she said in a confused, torn way that hurt him still more. It was so ingenuous and yet so pathetic that goodness to her should depend on precept rather than on reason. But still, if she felt that way, if part of the lovely fabric of her personality was woven out of those ancient dogmas, he mustn't destroy it.

Just before they left for the Sadler dinner she spoke of it again. She was dressed in the long pale-green gown, waiting for him.

"I'm sorry I felt that way," said Marie. "I don't now. It's all right. Two isn't so many children. It was just a kind of shock to think of beginning all that over again. But I may as well have another right off. Honestly, I'm glad."

"You're a sweet woman. So am I glad that there's to be another of our children. But afterward—after this one is born—we must work things out better, or

this isn't going to be the last time we'll be thoroughly disconcerted."

"Oh well, we don't have to think about it now."

"That's what we said when Pat was coming, and here we are. You know, darling, if you feel like this, I'm not sure we ought to live as we do. Separate rooms might be better."

He spoke hesitantly and yet with his usual determination to uncover the facts. Then as she gave him a strange glance he came over to where she stood.

"Marie, you've given me a lifetime of happiness already. Don't let me be greedy."

"Do you want me less than you did?" she asked.

That made him dizzy.

"Always more, my darling. It doesn't diminish. It isn't that kind of feeling. But don't you see what I mean? Just because that is true I'm so damned apt to sacrifice you."

For a moment she lay close against his breast. He loved the tense delicacy of her flashes of passion.

"Don't leave me alone. Not now," she said, softly.

That was what ran in Lewis's mind at the Sadler dinner party as he made conversation with Lucy Everett out of any flimsy material that came to hand. He was searching for the conclusion of that talk with his wife, hunting about mentally to see if there were any excuse for surrendering to her willingness to let decision drift with circumstance. It was not natural for him to do that. It involved a kind of

intellectual slovenliness which he did not commonly allow himself.

He had told himself more than once lately that he had known these complications would arise, known it even before he married. But until he had watched Marie during those months of carrying the child, until he had seen his wife suffer, it had been only theory on which he was informed. Now it was different. He was in conflict with the practice of the theory, disturbed by its cruelty, hostile against the insistence that nature must be let alone. It humiliated him that he was not able to use his own judgment in caring for the woman he loved.

What he had said to Marie was no less than the truth. He cared more deeply for her all the time. His love was woven into the relationship between them, the fabric of giving and reception, of abandonment and reserve, of trust and desire. There had been baffling hours between them, and difficult ones, but none that had been ugly. Blended with his desire for her now was an active necessity to cherish and protect her. And in that he was being thwarted and defied and directed, not by Marie, but by her religion.

At first it had not troubled him. On the other hand, he had been interested. Conforming to rules was an accustomed sort of intellectual exercise which he rather liked trying out. It stretched unused mental muscles. But when things like this arose it was no

longer exercise. It was submission. It was putting reason out of action.

And, looked at reasonably, the whole thing was absurd. He and Marie were willing to bear children. They already had one child and this unborn one would be equally dear to them. But it couldn't go on like that, child after child, year after year. It would exhaust Marie. It would make their marriage only an office of parenthood and that was not enough. They had not married only to bring children into the world. That was only part of it and not the major part. They had married for each other.

He was not interfering with Marie's religion, he thought. The shoe was on the other foot. It was interfering with him. It was allowing him no liberty of action, no free choice. The rules were not subject to change. And the reasons for the rules were clear enough. They were historical, political. The Church had to have masses of people to bear its burdens, masses of submissive people, disciplined ones, who were allowed the advantages of certain improvements in the natural world and denied others. He had tried to explain that to Marie, but it had been hopeless. Some mental doors of hers had closed, gently but firmly, against his arguments.

"Where's Dorothy Eldridge?" he asked Lucy at random, who had just quoted something Dorothy said. "I see John's here. Is she out of town?"

Lucy laughed. "No. She's home. She's furious."

"What's her trouble?"

"Haven't you really heard? Everyone else has and neither of them makes any secret of it. Dorothy's going to have another baby and John says that she's stopped speaking to him since she found out about it. She's simply wild."

"Still ——" said Lewis.

Lucy gave him a droll look.

"Exactly. There are other things that it takes two to make besides a quarrel. Anyway, I think it's rotten taste to make such a fuss as she is making. If she doesn't like it why doesn't she do something about it? She's paraded the whole thing to the town. It's all very well not to have inhibitions, but after all there are a few things that people ought to keep to themselves."

"Some people do."

"Not many. When I look around the table at a dinner party like this I'm always aghast at the number of intimate things I know about people. Aren't you? And the things they know about me. We get so confidential when we're low or tight."

Lewis's glance went to his wife, and his thoughts were gentle and proud. No one shared the secrets of their marriage. She would bear this child as she had the one before, with beautiful dignity, with grace. She would welcome it. He thought of the public storm of the Eldridges and the ugliness of it. After all, what more could a man ask than to be given as

much as he had been given, and as generously? Even if it meant complete restraint in the future, he could face that. But there it was. Suppose Marie didn't want restraint, even though the penalties for the lack of it fell on her.

"No," he answered a question, "Tim didn't come down. I think he's driving down later. Isn't he, Deb?"

"He hoped to," said Deborah.

Below, in the ballroom, a dance orchestra began to play and its melodies were sweetened by distance. There was a breeze so fresh that it seemed to be drawn from the depths of the water below. The waiters served baked Alaska.

"This is a grand place," said Lucy, "so divinely cool. It's been hideous out West."

"Where were you out West? And why at this time of year?"

She seemed surprised.

"I was in Reno, polishing off a marriage."

"Oh! I hadn't heard."

"There's no reason why you should have, I suppose. It was a small-type divorce. Not a headline."

"The best kind, I should say."

"They're all very tiresome. The machinery ought to be simplified," said Lucy. "I was talking to Charlotte Fairbanks about that. You know Charlotte, don't you?"

"She's my favorite friend—and enemy."

"Well, she says they keep trying to get sensible legislation through so people won't have to run out to support Nevada, but they always run into prejudices—you know, Catholics and people like that who fight it."

"My wife's a Catholic," said Lewis, irrelevantly.

"Oh, is she? I've always thought that if I belonged to any religion I'd be a Catholic. It's a fascinating religion, isn't it?"

"Very."

"Did you ever see any of those convents with gratings? I had a friend who knew a girl quite well who entered one of those and she never saw any of her family again ——"

On it went. It was familiar talk to Lewis, light, uninformed, not very prejudiced talk. But it revealed a startling gap.

They had coffee in the small room where liqueurs could also be served. There were several men paying attention to Marie. She was growing more responsive to casual admiration, and tonight, as if reacting from her depression of the afternoon, she seemed unusually alive and happy. The dinner was formally over by ten-thirty and a few of the guests settled down for bridge. The rest went downstairs to dance.

"Feeling all right?" asked Lewis, dancing with his wife after letting other partners have her for an hour.

"Of course. Don't look at me like that. It can't show yet."

He told her again that he loved her.

"You surprise me," said Marie. "I thought that infatuation was all over."

"Let's go home pretty soon."

"Let's dance until we drop from exhaustion. It's marvelous here tonight. Doesn't it seem impossible that it's so hot in Carmine? I wonder if it's cooled off there at all?"

"Not likely."

"Aren't we wickedly lucky?"

It was a light tune, one that Lewis never forgot or heard again without pain. For just then Mr. Sadler came in looking for him, beckoning him off the floor.

"Lewis, I want to speak to you."

It was not the social tone and Lewis became alert. He followed with Marie until they got outside of the range of the dancers, in the hallway outside.

"Where's Deborah?" asked Mr. Sadler.

"Upstairs on the balcony," said Marie, "when I saw her last. Has something happened?"

"Something appalling. Her husband's been in an accident. I've just had the message."

"Badly?" That was Lewis's quick anxiety.

"Very badly. Beyond hope."

"You mean he's dead—already!" exclaimed Marie.

"Before they reached the hospital."

"Dead ——" Lewis saw Marie's quick, instinctive Sign of the Cross as she repeated the word. There was something about it that shocked him, something in that instant submission that added to the horror.

"What happened?"

"A car seems to have crashed his. Apparently he'd started on his way down here. I can't tell Deborah. Will you?"

"I'll go to Deborah," said Marie.

Lewis followed. He had a feeling that he should stop it, that it wasn't in this way that Deborah should be told, that he must get her alone before anything could be said. Yet as those quick, instinctive thoughts rushed through his mind it was being done. It had to be done. He tried to help, had to watch Deborah's face stiffen into unbelief and terror, as Marie told her with a gentleness which was futile.

"Deborah—poor, dear Deborah, do try to think that he's with God. That he's gone to something better than all this ——"

Deborah's hands went up, a dreadful gesture of pushing away something that was unbearable, and her voice had no mercy on herself.

"Oh, don't talk that junk to me now!" she cried. "Lewis, where is what's left of Tim?"

Chapter Ten

IN THE SANFORD MANSION in St. Anthony there was a family reunion. Mrs. Sanford had begged them all to come to her on that Thanksgiving when Deborah's widowhood had not yet endured a holiday season. It was natural to Mrs. Sanford's gentle sentimentality to believe that on anniversaries grief became more cruel, using contrast and memory to terrible effect. But she had only said that she thought a family party might help and that it would be so much more cheerful for the children.

There was a blazing fire in the hall fireplace, lighting up the well of the staircase with its white, winding balusters and the faded red Turkish rugs, the old velvet draperies, the marbles on pedestals, and the rest of the heavy grandeur with which the rich surrounded themselves in the 'nineties. There was a fire in the drawing-room, too, where the portrait of Deborah that had been done before her marriage hung on the ivory wall. But all the fires in her mother's house could not make Deborah warm. Not even her children could do that. She had been

cold ever since she had been torn out of the embrace of love.

She sat before the fire with Charlotte Fairbanks and tried to tell her how hot it had been in August.

"I couldn't even blame the man," she said in that unflinching way she had when she talked of it. "It had been such a dreadful day, and they'd turned him off. He'd been some kind of a political agitator and they fired him on that hot afternoon. He didn't have any job and hardly any money. He had only a rattletrap of a car and a quart of gin. The brakes were bad on his car, but that was because he couldn't afford to have them fixed. And that was how Tim was killed. Quite by accident. Because of the gin and the bad brakes and the man's being fired. It wasn't manslaughter. It was an accident. One of the blunders which they try to tell you afterward are part of a godly and beautiful design."

Charlotte said: "Most people are afraid not to believe in a design. Accident scares them much more than punishment or discipline. They want to have a place to put the responsibility. They've got to have someone or something to put the blame on. You're not like that."

She did not try to comfort Deborah. From their first meeting she had not tried to wrap pity about the tragedy nor to pull Deborah away from the thought of it. She had offered no apologies for pain.

Deborah spoke out of her close-held thought:

"You know—I hadn't any idea how many mental narcotics are in common use. People have a confidential—almost sly—way of telling you that you can get relief by this method or by taking that dope. They're eager to tell you where the stuff's to be had—always in some church or some sublimation or some submission of your will. They're ready to promise that the suffering will be deadened if you'll swallow what they tell you to and relax."

"Which is just what you can't do."

"No, I can't. For the first thing you have to agree to—it's part of the anæsthetic—is that these things are beyond our comprehension, that they're beyond understanding. And I understand perfectly. I know what's happened to me. I loved a man, body, mind, every association. He's dead. There's nothing left of him and every nerve of my body and every thought of my brain aches with deprivation. No doubt in time I'll get hardened to going without. I don't want to romanticize even that. Little things about Tim are less clear already. Some of the detail in the picture is fading. I hate that. But there it is. I'm getting used to sleeping alone—to that dreadful waking alone."

Charlotte did not probe.

"It must be hell."

"Whatever that is," answered Deborah, "that or heaven. Marie tried to talk to me about heaven. It's strange. She constantly has prayers said for her

mother, who's dead. She wanted to have some said for Tim, by a strange priest!"

"Why?"

"That's what I asked her. It's incredible. She really believes that her mother is in an indefinite existence somewhere—what they call purgatory—and that every time a Catholic priest says a prayer that mentions her mother personally she gets time off for it."

"Oh, she doesn't really believe that! How could she?"

"But she does. And when enough prayers have been said—they're being sorted out and counted all the time—her mother will get out of purgatory."

"And then what happens?"

"Then she goes to heaven. I asked Marie what she meant by heaven, and she said that it was the sight of God. Queer, isn't it? She spoke so definitely of God."

"Of course Catholics do believe in a personal God. That's the hold of that Church. I can understand how it would work with the perfectly naïve, uneducated person—the simple mind that must have things formalized and gets his religion through images of harps and wings. I can even understand it in some of these weary sophisticates—like Aldous Marvin—who run through everything—tire of their own minds—and then become Roman Catholic in a kind

of final fling. But Marie seems different. She's quite intelligent. I get puzzled about her."

"Sometimes I almost hate her," said Deborah.

Charlotte's head turned in astonished questioning. But Deborah was going on:

"It's so hard to watch her happiness. To see her carrying life and feel death in myself."

"But you've had that, Deb. You've had your children."

"Yes, but they're separate from me now. It's not like having Tim. You've no idea how I suffer when I watch Marie. I know it's jealousy, of course."

"She's not to blame for being happy," said Charlotte, as if she'd decided on that before. "You can't hold that against her."

"I know. But I sometimes wonder if she's using the happiness. It's like her prodigious fortune which she can't possibly spend. Just now I can't bear to see happiness lost or wasted or thrown away or restricted. Do I sound crazy?"

"No. But I don't see at all what you mean. For she is happy, isn't she? Aren't both of them still rather idyllic?"

Deborah held that question a moment. Leaning her head against the back of her chair, she stared into the fire. There was a definite resemblance between her and Charlotte, a reflection of like environment and habit, of similar habits of thought. The privilege of giving orders instead of the necessity

of taking them showed in their faces, and the aristocrat's acceptance of personal responsibility, which gives a look of confidence and bravery, was there, too. But Deborah's eyes were tragic, Charlotte's merely grave.

"Sometimes I wonder," said Deborah at length, "and sometimes I think I'm imagining things—being sort of literary about that situation. I know it seems perfect. Marie's not only beautiful. She has comfortable virtues. She's pleasant. She doesn't quarrel. And if just now she seems a little withdrawn, that's natural enough in pregnancy. Yet I have the strangest sense of lack of completion about those two. Especially about Lewis. It's as if he were still straining for her, as if he didn't quite have her. He's completely my brother—do you know what I mean? But I see him less completely as Marie's husband."

"But anyone can tell how fond he is of her. It's in every glance," Charlotte answered.

"I know all that. It's there for the world to read. But that's not enough. When he's with me, for example, he seems entirely himself. But with Marie there isn't quite so much ease. The situation is still a shade uncertain, just a little indecisive. I can't get at it and I'm not intruding on them. But with me and Tim it wasn't that way. I don't think we were any more in love than Marie and Lewis are, but we were closer, better merged."

"I don't see why that should be so."

"Well, for one reason there's her fortune. She's his wife, but she's also the monstrously rich Hawley heiress. You know she's connected with that man Jeffrey and his terrible satellites. I think that's galling to Lewis. 'No one is sure of which side of the fence I'm really on,' he said to me once not long ago. He'd like to do something in politics, and it's a handicap to have the ordinary person see him only as the husband of a woman with a great fortune, whose interests have to be protected. It appears to tie his hands even if it doesn't actually do so."

"There ought to be a way out of that."

"It's harder than you'd imagine to find it. But that's just one blockade. Then there's her convinced religion and his lack of it. How close can an intelligent man like Lewis really come to a girl who believes that when she dies she will gradually work up to playing a harp? No. Physically, emotionally I mean, the thing's well enough. But mentally ——"

"It's the physical part that counts most."

Deborah spoke sharply.

"I don't believe that. I know it's not true. More and more I'm sure that the basis of any relation worth having—and that means worth suffering for —is mental. I told you a minute ago that I could get used to living alone. It's a ghastly kind of physical homesickness, but it will dull. The thing I can't ever get used to and that gets worse and worse is

thinking alone. I know how beastly ungracious it sounds, but there's no sympathy that means anything now that Tim is gone."

"But you had it," said Charlotte again.

They carried the conversation no further. It was growing too intimate and too painful. Only after a moment Deborah said, reflectively: "You know, you can pay for those prayers. For having masses said. That was what Marie wanted to do for Tim. To pay in dollars and cents, in coin of the realm, for respite in eternity. How Tim would have laughed!"

"Where's Marie this afternoon?"

It was six o'clock. Charlotte had come in an hour before and found the house quiet and only Deborah downstairs. The tea-table stood between them now, with its heavy silver tray, eggshell cups, and enameled cigarette-box.

"She went upstairs about an hour ago to see her baby off to bed. No doubt she's resting. She gets a bit tired. And mother went off to a Thanksgiving vesper service." Deborah laughed in her new, weary way. "Mother's social relations are perfect, even with the Lord. She'd think it very rude not to take some notice of Him on a semi-religious holiday. Lewis took my kids off to the puppet show, where I hope they'll laugh enough to shake down their enormous dinners. I think they're coming now, from the noise."

A car purred under the old-fashioned *porte-co-*

chère and stopped. The children came in—four thin, brown-skinned, clear-eyed children who were like Tim and Deborah.

"Hello, Charlotte!" said Lewis, cordially, unmistakably glad to see her.

Deborah loosened the children's wraps and welcomed their enthusiasm over the puppet show.

"I let Anna go out this afternoon," she told Charlotte, "and Marie's nurse has gone by this time, so I must see that these children get their supper. Mother's cook would just turn them loose on turkey again. I know her."

"Can't I help?"

"There's not enough to do. It's only ladling cream of wheat into bowls. You might give Lewis a cup of tea if you want to be useful. Or do you want a highball, Lewis?"

"Tea just now," he said.

Deborah marshaled the children through the door.

"You two can get up a fight while I'm gone," she called back to Lewis and Charlotte.

But neither of them seemed eager to do that. Left together, Charlotte poured out a cup of tea and Lewis took Deborah's deserted chair and stretched his long legs to the fire.

"How've you been?"

"Fine."

"It's great to see you, Charlotte. Why don't you ever come to stay with us?"

"I never go in that direction. And I've been busy."

"With what?"

"The stray ends of other people's business, mostly. I went about with Ruth Dodge while she campaigned for the Senate, and I never got quite back to the point of minding my own business."

"Do you like politics?"

"It doesn't matter whether I do or not, does it? It's the only machinery there is to work with."

"Rickety and dangerous as it is," he agreed.

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing. It's the slack season."

"Why don't you run for the state Senate this next year, Lew? You threatened to years ago."

"Why should I?"

"You know quite well why. Because you don't need the job and it does need you. It's a body without a head."

He laughed. "A body that certainly wouldn't pick me to head it."

"They wouldn't pick anyone. You've got to suggest yourself. Insist on yourself."

"Too modest," said Lewis.

"Too rotten lazy."

"No. As a matter of fact I had thought of it, more than once. I'd rather like it."

"Then why don't you?"

"Oh, there are reasons."

"Secrets?"

"Far from it. I suppose any man on the street would tell you why I wouldn't be an acceptable candidate."

"I haven't asked any of them. You tell me."

"For one thing, I'm not very bright, and I've had no political grooming."

"You're hedging."

He gave her a frank look.

"You know the basic reason quite well. I'm the husband of a very rich woman."

"That doesn't seem much of a reason to me. Plenty of men with rich wives get into politics. Look at Frank Lobar."

"There's an obvious difference. Marie's interests have always maintained a lobby in the legislature. Surely you know that."

"Everyone does, of course."

"Exactly. Well, there you are. I've had nothing to do with it. Neither has Marie. She doesn't know what it's all about. It's been done by some of the people who handle her affairs. But indirectly its results have affected her. And by the same token they're supposed to affect me. Perhaps they do. Anyway, nobody would ever believe that I wasn't grinding some ax if I got into politics. Or that I wasn't in it for what I could get out of it."

"But you wouldn't be. And you'd soon make that apparent."

"I wonder if it's as simple as all that."

"That kind of doubt makes me tired," said Charlotte, impatiently. "Is it your pride that gets in your way? Or don't you want to stand up to criticism?"

She always brought out the fight in him.

"It's neither," he answered, and now his tone matched her own. "It's rather a conviction that the thing's not feasible. You're talking about practical politics, remember, the kind of politics that are all mixed up with gossip and suspicion and calumny—the kind that exists. Politics isn't dealing with a lot of intellectuals. They may make fine distinctions. But the crowd doesn't and won't. To them I'm Marie Hawley's husband, in with her on her interests, where I ought to be, and therefore tied up with Jeffrey and the rest of the crooks who've used the legislature for their own purposes for years."

"I think you could cut right through all that. It would only take an issue large enough—impersonal enough—to clear the air."

"But the issues which interest me have directly to do with the situation that I'd be most suspected of having a personal interest in, and there you are. I don't want to start a campaign for clean books!"

"No," she agreed, with equal sarcasm, "I didn't suppose that was your main idea."

"I want to do some work on taxation and on legislation which directly affects the mines. I'd like to see the mining towns saved from extermination if

it's possible, to see what can be done to put back hope in those poor, barren, graft-ridden towns and the people who have to live there. It can be done—at least the possibility's there. There's still ore, and prosperity, if they don't continue to tax the industry past the point of interesting capital. There's a chance, too, of a decent, liberal political alignment which would see that."

"Of course there is."

They had swung into their old companionship. He had always liked to talk with Charlotte, been able to express himself to her. Her mind needed no compliments, sported no affectations. An argument between them sounded angry, but never was. It was never an effort to destroy.

"I'll tell you what I'd like to do," he began, and just then Marie came in.

"Don't let me interrupt," she said, but everything was interrupted. The way Lewis's face changed and softened, his manner in jumping up to meet his wife, his tender question as to how she felt, and her smile at him suddenly made the whole world personal. It was Charlotte who felt that she was interrupting a greeting less passionate because of her presence.

"What were you talking about?" asked Marie. "You both seemed so intent."

"Politics, mostly. Charlotte wants me to run for office."

"What office?"

"She can't find one to suit me. None high enough —or is it low, Charlotte?"

Charlotte ignored him. "I think he should be in the state senate for a starter, Marie."

"That's a good idea," said Marie. "Why don't you, Lewis?"

With equal care Lewis and Charlotte did not look at each other.

"Who'd vote for me?" asked Lewis.

Charlotte said: "He's too self-conscious. That's his trouble."

"Why don't you make him do it, Charlotte? You know all about those things."

"I haven't any influence."

"Oh, but you have!" said Marie. "He's always quoting you."

"Well, I'll use what I have to see if you'll both come to dinner tomorrow night, then. Just a few people, Marie, and you can go home when you feel like it." Charlotte turned to Lewis. "I'm having Aldous Marvin. You remember him."

"I haven't seen him in years. I've read his books and seen some amazing caricatures of him. Gone very precious, hasn't he?"

"His books sound so, especially this last one. And he's become a Roman Catholic."

"I'd heard that."

"He's quite famous now in literary circles. It will be quite a lot of fun to see what he's really like. He's

just out in St. Anthony to adjust his brother's estate. It all went to him, of course."

"Where does he live?"

"Oh, New York, I suppose. I've seen him in hotels there. And Paris. Wherever it's sufficiently literary."

Chapter Eleven

ALDOUS MARVIN HIMSELF was not sure what he was like. He knew that he confused other people and it gave him considerable delight to twist their impressions about, to wipe out one with another. Puzzling himself was an even more intricate game, a refinement of mental pleasure. He never attempted to be quite sure about himself. The battle for clarity, the struggle for personal resolution and understanding which he had watched so many of his friends fight, seemed to him to be a footless one, a battle interesting only at the pitch of its conflict and petering out invariably to a defeat that was despair or a victory that was disillusioning.

He had always preferred question to answer. In question the human mind was, to his thinking, always at its best, displaying its powerful spring and stretch. But in answer, strayed ever so little from the protection of facts, it nearly always cut a poor figure, was sure to show its limitations and flaws and incapacities. And answer was always open to attack. Some one came along and said something better or more profound that shredded the answer, made it obsolete.

Marvin knew that to be true historically, politically, philosophically. He hated to find his own thoughts becoming obsolete, and it had happened to him often enough to put him on his guard. Fifteen years of experience in the writing and criticism of books had convinced him, before forty, that literary expression had the seeds of decay in it. Even if its validity lasted, its vitality did not. One could not anticipate the coming method of thought and it was the method that changed rather than the problems or the materials with which the mind worked. It was possible, Marvin knew, to propitiate the method or to mock it, according to taste or mood, and it was even possible to imitate it past detection, though never to personal satisfaction, for the mind of forty, no matter how well kept, could not really be the mind of twenty-five. Enthusiasms did not taste the same at one age as at the other. Marvin had seen his early modernism become old-fashioned, grow stale and stiff. It made him deeply covetous of something beyond fashion, impervious to mood, indifferent to youth. That was why he admired the Catholic Church, because it was all those things, because it had managed never to become obsolete, because it had survived its reformations and schisms and done so without losing its temper or altering its doctrine or becoming less absolute.

He liked what he considered its exquisite technique in answering questions. It began with an offer

of the simplest dogma, the most definite working rules, but if one pushed question past these he met an entanglement of precedents, submissions, precise logic, imperturbable avoidances and conclusions based on the obscure decisions of ancient councils. It was like the pleasure of working in some tremendous library in which one could not hope to master all the material. And before the final answer was held the beautiful mask of eternity.

That was satisfying. He found, too, an involved pleasure in his own submissions after overmuch mental freedom, in the fine-spun secrecies of the Church, which contrasted so sharply with the stripped frankness of his own generation. He believed that life was much more interesting when sin was admitted than when it was denied. The flat level to which so many intellectuals reduced all actions seemed very dreary and unimaginative to Marvin, and he found it a barren world which wiped out the distinction between sin and virtue and the constant temptation of each for the other. And the Church gave Marvin intellectual exercise without drudgery. It gave him assurance, too, that he need not come to a conclusion of his own, that finality was not one of the things he would be held to account for. That was in other hands. He might endlessly experiment with mysticism, faith, and angels dancing on the points of needles, but in the long run he would not have to decide about himself. In the end he would only be

a soul dependent on the mercy of his Creator. If it had delighted him to turn on a fuddled intellectual world with so simple a solution, or even if his tongue was slightly in his cheek as he accepted certain matters of faith, such flaws were only part of human fallibility and did not nullify his actions.

Standing in front of his mirror on the night he was to dine at the Fairbanks house, his reflection certainly told nothing consistent or accurate as to the manner of man he was. His rather broad, whitish face might have been gentle and sentimental, but it was still rather than responsive. His eyes were cold, with a glance that seemed to derive from the brain rather than from any emotion. Yet there was always a forecast in them of the warmth and tenderness with which they could rest on an object of beauty or on a woman. It might have been a sensual face, but the deliberately firm lips denied that, denied their own pleasures. In its publicity his face had so often been called typically ascetic that many people believed it was true.

He was not greatly interested in the evening before him. Charlotte Fairbanks was the kind of woman whom he found very unrestful. He did not like the clamor her mind set up and his ultra-montane feminism could not accept her independences. He had little curiosity about Lewis Sanford, whom he had not seen in years, and none at all in his unknown wife. Marvin was in the Middle West only

because of necessity and was not planning on staying a day longer than he must. Things waited elsewhere. The imminent publication of a new book meant less to him than it used to, but there were certain avenues down which he hoped to direct the discussion of it and it was necessary to be in New York and later in London to attend to that. Also, there was a boy in New York on whose mind and possible soul Marvin had his adroit fingers at the moment. He was finding out at just what age and with just what temperament religion could be substituted for sexual impatiences. It would be a mistake to leave the boy uncompanioned too long, even with the contact between them held firm by letters. A despairing mood, a few drinks of gin, and the material would never be quite the same to work with again.

There were habits of life, too, which he missed, as well as the dignity and diffusion of large cities, which, with cloisters, were the only places where Marvin really liked the air. Here, in St. Anthony, there were memories of early intimacy which he had quite deliberately left behind him. He did not like to be pulled back to the place where he had gone to grammar-school. For he had nothing now in common with that pasty-faced boy who had begun his education in fogginess, nor any liking for him. Marvin disliked the casual contact with people who had known his father and mother and brother and who believed that family reminiscence was always

pleasant. He was annoyed when people called him "Aldy," and there were men about the city, bankers and brokers and stoutish men at clubs, who persisted in referring to him that way. His hope was to cut this visit in St. Anthony as short as possible and never come back again. He was making arrangements to have his money follow him. The whole Middle West seemed to him a failure in living. Its ways were wasteful, its society a stupid clatter, its women charmless, its whole mood shallow.

Coming upon Marie Sanford a half-hour later, he could hardly believe in his luck. He had always been glad when he found a woman in her condition beautiful. Once he had stayed for a month at a little inn in Brittany for no greater purpose than to observe the young wife of the innkeeper who was about to bear a child. Of course he had turned his visit to literary advantage later. He had written a book about the pregnant country woman, describing her in his most precious manner, and it had been a great success, partly because it was supposed to have an obscure meaning, partly because its almost lyrical prose made it easy to read and praise, and pleasant for people in hospitals.

Women, Aldous believed, were only ugly in pregnancy when it embarrassed them or when they tried to conceal it. Having carefully built up the point of view, it was delightful to find further proof. And he had never seen any woman quite so lovely as

Marie. That was his first half-hour's impression of her as they all drank cocktails in the library, among rows and rows of long-unopened books. She wore a soft velvet dress of rose color. Deborah was in white, and Charlotte in a golden sheath of gown. They were only foils.

"These are *foie-gras*," said Charlotte, indicating small brown bread sandwiches among the *canapés*. "How is goose liver on Friday, Aldous? Is that all right with you?"

"Most certainly not. I'll stay right by the red caviare."

"It seems such an unimportant part of a goose for you and Marie to take so seriously."

"It's a vital part. Didn't you ever have any physiology?" asked Lewis.

Without a change of expression, curiosity had leaped into flame in Aldous Marvin's mind. The quick spread of his imagination covered all the interesting points—A Sanford married to a Catholic girl, a Catholic girl in this group which was so hard-riding mentally, a Catholic woman who would be bound gently and firmly as the Church bound women. It was the kind of situation that his mind coveted. And, moving to Marie's side, he chose a subject well removed from Catholicism as he listened for the cadences of her thought and watched the beauty of her face, fatigued a little now by the demands of the rest of her body.

He was beautifully mannered. There was no break in the ease he created between her and himself. In five minutes of casual talk he had placed her and sketched in her background. Now that occasion jogged his memory, he remembered hearing that Lewis Sanford had married some rich girl. He was familiar with the Hawley name in the state. But until now he hadn't tied the two things together.

"You don't live here, do you?" asked Marie.

"No, and until now I've not considered that one of my misfortunes. But then perhaps you don't often live here, either?"

"We live in one of the mining towns up north."

"And you like it?"

"I'm used to it. I always feel that it's where I belong."

"Have you given other places a chance to make you feel that way?"

She considered. "I went to school in the East. Later I lived in Paris one winter. And we come down here or go to New York fairly often. But it's only a matter of trips—of being away from home. Lewis likes the mining country, and so do I."

"I suppose that's the excitement of being close to sources."

"It's not exciting; it's dull. Sometimes I know Carmine is the ugliest place in the world. But I was born there and if you belong to a place when you're

young you can never quite get away from it. Do you think so?"

Marvin was sure that one could get away. His life, until he was eighteen, possibly until the publication of his first fling of satire, had no claim on him now that he was willing to admit. The deliberate mystic that he had come to be did not belong, he was quite sure, to his early period of enforced high school, of sports for which he had no taste, of an inferiority which he had been resolved to change into superiority.

"Not if there's a genuine claim of temperament," he said, for there was always a way of agreement to be found, if that was what was needed.

"That's true. For my father came from a place which was utterly unlike the one he ended in. But Carmine was his town, not Philadelphia.

"And that barren north suits you?"

"I think so."

"It seems incredible."

"Does it? The streets are short and ragged at the ends and the mines are close and the people who work in them are always strangers, and the ones who don't work in them stranger still. It's probably far worse than you imagine it." She laughed. "But there we stay, Lewis to experiment with his ores, I to be with Lewis."

"Not to experiment with Lewis?"

"Why should I?"

"You shouldn't. Though most women seem to have an idea that's what they were born for."

"I'm not nearly clever enough."

"I've an idea that you've left cleverness miles behind you. But I still can't see you in your mining town. It makes you some one to stop and stare at. That's not the way it should be. A background's wrong if it makes you conspicuous, isn't it? Now Paris—Paris would be much better than New York for you ——"

"I loved Paris. For just a month or so I did cherish a plan to live there."

"I do live there quite often. I've a flat in a close-shuttered boulevard. There's forsythia in the garden across the way and I overlook it in the spring. Don't you like the way that flowers so bravely without leaves? It's not my forsythia, of course, but I don't mind its being anonymous. And in the fall, when the chestnut trees are tired, they can rest along my street. There's not the slightest hurry—ever."

She was looking at him differently now, captured by that fragment of prose.

"I wish I could see it."

"You can. When will you come to Paris?"

"Not this year. As you see, I've an engagement in the early spring."

"An engagement with life," he said.

The conversation of the others fell into the lapse of their voices.

"If you don't, Lewis, it's just because you're lazy."

"That's a good reason, too," said Lewis.

"They're talking about getting Lewis into politics," Marie explained.

"Why do you want to force such unattractive company on him, Charlotte?" asked Marvin.

"To increase its charm."

"But against his will?"

"Oh, he ought to, whether he wants to or not."

"You don't consider free will important, then?"

"Well, you don't believe in it at all, do you, Aldy?"

"I believe in it very much indeed."

Charlotte looked skeptical.

"I've read your books," she said.

"I've often wondered who does," remarked Brett Jones. "I see them around bookshops, Aldy, but they're too expensive for me."

"I'm going to read them," said Marie. "I wanted to before I met you."

Marvin sliced off their conversation from the general one again by a casual turn of his shoulder.

"I'm glad you've not read them," he told her. "Not that I'm turning on my own books, but I'd rather make my own impression than leave it to them. On you, at least."

"Literary people terrify me."

"You don't mean to write me off with that horrible adjective?"

"Do you mind it? Once in my early youth I was in love with a writer. It was my doing, not his. He spoke to the convent alumnæ association and I think that some of the girls went straight to confession after the lecture. But I thought he was wonderful and angled to meet him, and after I did I angled again to find out what he thought of me. He said that I looked like an ice-cream soda. For a long while I felt foamy. It turned me against lace and ruffles."

She was not trying to prod him into compliment. She was amused and indifferent as she recalled it.

"He was just a fool," said Aldous.

"I'm not sure. He still writes books. I never read them, though."

"I hope no one else does, either. He must have been a very dull fellow, one of the writers who goes about picking the butts of similes out of gutters. There are too many of those indigent minds."

"To be fair about it, I think there was a good deal of truth in what he said about me then."

"There wasn't any truth in it. It's not possible."

"Being literary yourself, you wouldn't describe me like that?"

"I wonder," said Aldous Marvin, in a tone as light as hers, out of a very serious mood, "If I ever would be confident enough to describe you at all.

Though the curious thing is that I've kept all the words and phrases ready for years."

He was telling the exact truth, though he was aware that for the time it must go as gallantry. It was exciting to be truthful and at the same time achieve his end, a thing not commonly possible, especially with women. In the panorama of his life there had been plenty of women. Each one of them had been mentally at his mercy before he was through with her. Whether she ended by loving or hating him, it had been the same. He guarded his own delights against disappointments by cautions, by his refusal to let his anticipations ever get the upper hand. But at the moment he was singularly free from caution. For once he knew that it was extra baggage, that he could get along without it. This girl hardly knew he was with her and had little curiosity about him as he drifted out of the multitude of people she did not know. She was absorbed, and though she was pliant, Aldous knew that was not because she yielded to any force in him.

Yet he felt that she probably had everything he asked of women, everything he had come to retain as valuable after a long testing and sifting of them. Beauty, docility, fertility—those were the qualities which Aldous found admirable in woman. They had to be rarefied, or at least kept to their original meanings to suit him. He did not confuse sluggishness, patience, or long-suffering with docility, or occa-

sional child-bearing with fertility. His contempt for the sharpening of women's wits, for the deflection of their labor into the wage-earning world, for the blatant advertisement which they gave to the processes of sex, was boundless. To his mind the result of it all was a world strewn with sick nerves and littered with the torn fragments of modesties. Women, he believed, had no chance of fulfillment unless they built upon their proper nature instead of making themselves semi-sterile and synthetic creatures. Much of this he had said, rather gracefully, in print. He could prove it in words. But in life his examples often got away from him. His docile woman was over-apt to become a sullen or dull one. And he himself, being an artist, avoided the responsibilities which trailed after fertility. It was not possible or comfortable to live in a state of nature, so it was necessary to maintain a considerable detachment, not to confuse theory and practice and to wait for what might come out of the future.

Marie had no notion, as the evening wore on, that Aldous was thinking closely of her, and he found that also to his liking. He guessed that she saw him as a pleasant, not very handsome man, approaching middle age, slightly removed from the average company by his profession, and with the writer's faint odor of cleverness. He treasured the surprise of himself. There was a great deal more than that to unwrap and display, and he knew it.

There were ways, too, in which her own charm, if not deepened, could be set off to vastly better advantage. They kept coming to his mind. But at present he was outside all the intimacies which had a claim on her. Except one. He, too, was a Catholic. Sanford wasn't. Aldous wondered if Marie were devout. It would make a difference.

All during the evening he felt as if he were passing his hand over a lovely fabric, though he did not single her out too obviously. No one wanted to play bridge except Brett Jones, who sulked over the lack of a game. Instead they lingered over their coffee and tiny glasses of cognac and the talk sped from subject to subject, followed by a very easy wit. It was Aldous's profession to observe quickly, and his distinction that he did it completely. He saw many things. He saw Deborah's determination never to let her mask of composure slip even when she spoke about her dead husband. Marvin did not pity her. That kind of courage went down a blind alley, he believed, but it was part of the technique of being an aristocrat.

He wondered about Charlotte Fairbanks, who was so markedly interested in Lewis Sanford's political ambitions. Was there an emotional rapport there? If there was, it was still unlit, only a fire laid ready. But what chance had a girl like Charlotte who decked herself in information and intelligence, a girl with her pride drawn like a sword, against that

other, who could carry a man's child with such complete beauty and friendliness? Unless Sanford himself had some curious blind spot. Aldous knew that there were men who humbugged themselves into admiration of such nervous mental activity as Charlotte had. He noticed, too, that Marie invariably fell out of the political discussion. It seemed to him that the lack of intimacy between her and the other women was obvious. They knew all about her, he decided—without knowing her at all.

The talk rested on books for a time, partly in deference to him, partly because it was a company which salted its living with reading. Marvin's comment or anecdote dipped lightly into the conversation. It had nothing new to offer him. He knew the original sources of these opinions and heard nothing new in their dislikes or approbations or defiances.

When they spoke of people he was as little interested. As for the political situations which beset them, they seemed to Aldous hardly more than confessions of failure.

"Of course it's going to be an amazing year," said Charlotte. "Every prejudice is going to be dragged out of its hole. It's going to be ugly, I'm afraid."

"I wonder if there's as much prejudice as is rumored."

"If there's a Catholic candidate for President, you'll soon find out."

"Well, that's certainly in the cards."

"They ought to keep religion out of politics," said Brett Jones, and Aldous, looking very affable, wondered scornfully when religion had ever been able to keep out of politics.

"I don't know," said Deborah. "I think it will be a good thing to air a few prejudices. They'd smell so much sweeter afterward. Don't you think so, Aldy?"

He wished that she wouldn't hark back to that distasteful nickname.

"Don't I think what?"

"That it would be good for the Catholic Church to be discussed in the market-place."

"It wouldn't be much of a novelty, would it?" inquired Aldous. "It's always been the Church of the common people. And they go to the market-place. You're not so apt to be there yourself, Deborah. You may not hear the discussion if it comes off."

"I shall make a point of being there."

"I'm not sure," said Lewis, "that I won't support the Catholic candidate for President, if he's nominated. Partly because I think he's a good man, but mostly because of the tradition that a Catholic can never be President."

"Why can't a Catholic be President?" asked Marie.

"Because he's a minion of the Pope," answered Aldous, satirically, "and a nation like this, which submits so readily to every form of mental tyranny, is afraid of Rome."

Deborah said, quickly and impatiently: "Ah, that's not fair. It's a much more sinister thing."

Aldous smiled in a way which refused to argue.

"You see what happens in the drawing-room," he said. "I'm not so sure about the wisdom of stirring up that discussion in the market-place. It's been tried off and on for centuries. There's nearly always a battle. Fists and stones begin to fly."

"But that's what's so unreasonable. Why can't Catholicism be discussed on its merits, just like any other question?"

Marie was listening. Aldous was pleasantly conscious of it as he answered.

"Not so unreasonable. No Catholic will admit that his religion is on a par with any other subject. He can't admit the possibility of the argument's going against him. He knows not only that he has an immortal soul, which many other Christians also concede, but that life places his soul in a state of sin and peril and the methods of saving or losing it have been revealed to his Church."

Charlotte laughed.

"Aldous, just between us, do you really believe in an immortal soul?"

"Why not?"

Marie was looking at both of them.

"I do," she said, as if she couldn't help saying it.

The assertion left her curiously unprotected. It could not be ignored, and for a moment she faced

them all. Aldous kept himself an onlooker. He did not help her.

"But there's no proof that the soul's immortal, Marie," Charlotte answered. "Of course for a long time it was a hope. But science has never given the slightest evidence of anything except that it isn't immortal. And psychology has split up what people used to think was the soul and divided it among different functions of the body. Immortality's just a lovely theory."

"No, it isn't. It's a fact."

"But what makes you think so?"

It was clear that Marie was speaking from the kind of conviction that Aldous had just analyzed, that she could concede nothing. But she fumbled.

"The Church has proved it. It's part of the teaching. It's a matter of faith."

As good an answer as another, thought Aldous, rapidly unrolling its possibilities and playing with it rhetorically in his own mind. But he saw the slight humiliation with which Lewis caught up the conversation and the courteous contempt with which the others let Marie's go without rebuttal. There was no doubt of it. This was a very delicate situation. Aldous had never seen its exact parallel. But it was a situation in which thousands of others were more or less involved. He would like to see more of it.

"How long are you in town for, Marvin?" asked Brett.

"I'm going East next week."

"For good?"

His answer was a completely new one, developed by the evening.

"I'm not sure. I may come back in a few months. They tell me property will move more easily next spring. And I haven't seen a mid-Western summer in a long while. You've certainly learned to brag about them out here. Are they as beautiful up north as people say, Mrs. Sanford?"

"Not in Carmine. But I could show you some beautiful places," said Marie.

"I'm sure of that."

He was sure of it. He liked to find the double meaning and dwell on it. She was the kind of woman who would show men lovely places, if his first quick impression were not deluding him. And he had trained his impressions not to do that. What did Marie Sanford show to her husband, Aldous wondered, and what places would look the same to those two temperaments? He thought about it after he went back to his dead brother's house that night, the big, ugly, middle-class house that he was eager to sell. Marie Sanford had a great deal of money, an immense amount. It gave her a certain independence and yet she seemed a dependent person. And she was very lovely. There would be a story to be written of her. But, as he tried to imagine it, his mind went past his own inventions and tried to probe the

facts. What were her relations with her husband? Did Lewis Sanford subconsciously object to his wife's religion, mannerly and devoted though he was?

He never had objected. But that night, after Marie and Lewis had gone back to the elder Mrs. Sanford's house, they seemed to be thinking separately.

"Feeling all right, darling? It didn't tire you?"

No. I had quite a good time. I thought Aldous Marvin was interesting."

"He's a queer fish. He has an involved mind. Clever, though."

"I thought he was quite simple."

"Jesuitical," said Lewis, and was immediately apologetic. "I'm sorry for the word. I was only using it in the corrupted sense."

"I wish you wouldn't. It sounds bigoted."

"Then I won't. For I'm not a bigot. But neither must you be, my darling. I wish ——"

"Wish aloud," she suggested.

"I wish you'd get to know Charlotte better. She'd be very good for you."

"How?"

"She's always a devoted friend, and she's very intelligent."

"Yes, I think she must be. But she's bigoted."

"Oh, you don't know her. There's nothing she

hates more. She thinks everything out for herself. I wish you'd do that a little more, Marie."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't think I'm criticizing, dear. But take this point which came up tonight about immortality. You ought to be able to figure that out for yourself instead of taking some one's say-so about it."

"But that's an article of faith, Lewis."

Lewis's voice had a touch of irritation.

"That's just the trouble."

"Trouble?" she repeated.

"No—not exactly. But I can't bear to see your mind so ready to accept these things, to do what it's told, to take such a lot of discipline unthinkingly. There's a lack of dignity in it. Oh, I'm sorry, darling! You look tired and I'm talking like a fool. Forgive me, won't you?"

But it was not a matter of forgiveness. Aldous Marvin could have told them that.

Chapter Twelve

EASTER CAME EARLY THAT year. It came before the sun had melted the last snow hiding under bushes and in hollows and while the wind was still rough and chapped. But it was confident of spring. So were the patches of green grass, the stray robins, the hungry little April buds. Father Michael Carroll, starting out from the parish house to see if he could collect some money, saw an ungainly willow bush by the sidewalk. Its gray, furry buds, slipping from their brown shells, touched dormant memories and he suddenly recalled that he had once written a poem about willows in spring. Not this kind of hard, gamin willow, but gentle ones which bent to listen to a brook. He had seen them on a spring holiday which had taken him from New York into Connecticut, and when he came back to the city he had put his images into verse. During that year he had written a good many poems and even had ambitions to have some of them published. They seemed so eager for friends and sympathy. He had talked to Father Waldron about that and he

still remembered that Father Waldron had thought it might be a mistake.

Father Carroll had only been ordained a year at that time. He said that he didn't see why it should be. The conversation stood in a frame of memory before him now, unfaded.

"If you make your appreciations finer, why doesn't that make you a better priest?" he asked.

Father Waldron was a bishop now. Then he had been rector of a parish in New York and immensely fond of the young assistants who came to him trailing the enthusiasms of the seminary. He had always been equally patient and practical with them.

"A priest isn't a poet," he had stated with some finality.

"He could be," insisted Father Carroll. "I'm not sure that he shouldn't be. He's in touch with the great mysteries. He has freer access to the sources of beauty than most men."

"The appeal of poetry is to the senses," said the older priest, reflectively.

"But isn't the same thing true of the great cathedrals?" asked Father Carroll. "What else are they for?"

"To house the Lord."

"Of course. But they were built magnificently in order to bring beauty to religion. Isn't that the ultimate end?"

"The end is the adoration of God in the Blessed

Trinity and the salvation of man's soul for that purpose," remarked Father Waldron with a touch of dry rebuke. "The Church uses beauty when it is fitting. It approves the decoration of its altars at the proper seasons. It uses golden vessels, handsome vestments. But I have said Mass in a shabby little house in rural Virginia where there was no church, and no external beauty was needed to make the service the same as the one in St. Peter's at Rome."

"I don't mean that kind of external beauty," Father Carroll said. "I'm thinking of the beauty of thought and words."

"We have that, too. There are the psalms. The Tenebræ. The hymns of the Church. No, my boy, it's not the business of a priest who must spend his Saturday afternoons in the confessional and sit by some deathbed frequently to be hammering away at rhymes. He has to keep his mind on other things. Mind, I don't say that a pretty verse now and then isn't harmless, and even pleasing to many people."

That wasn't what Father Carroll meant, to write a verse or two now and then which would ultimately be given the imprimatur in a little volume and sold sparsely among the rosaries and statues in Catholic shops. His æsthetics ran thicker. He had dreamed of interpreting his faith through beautiful verbal images. He was not content to be harmless or even pleasing. But he found the argument hard. It was uphill work, arguing against the experience of

Father Waldron. Little by little he had ceased to argue. His own experience had drawn him to the other side. It was not just those long afternoons in the confessional with their endless repetitions of fear and failure, not just the struggle to get enough money to run a church or an orphanage or a parochial school, not just the constant fanning of the flame of faith in his people when the modern wind was always in the wrong direction. Such things all took time, but none of them was the reason why writing poetry became a burden even when he occasionally set himself to it. It was that he gradually ceased to believe in the importance of human beauty. He was no longer interested in pussy-willows or brooks or in the things accessible to the touch or hearing or sight. Only the indescribable and mysterious soul remained beautiful and the pity and pain of its lift toward the infinite important. The rest of life Father Carroll condoned or explained or condemned in relation to that. He watched men die. He listened to the endless suffering and despair of women. Before he had been a priest very long he saw for himself that life had little mercy, that it could never be trusted, and he believed all the more strongly in the infinite and withheld mercy of God. He was sorry for pain. But he thought of what the Saviour had suffered in founding His Church and knew that his own part was in its conscientious maintenance.

It needed a great deal of material help in Carmine just now. Though the bishop had told Father Carroll, in sending him there, that the parish was rich and well supported, he was finding its difficulties on the increase. The operation of the mines was becoming more speculative. Since the Emmitt had shut down and the superintendent of that mine gone to California, one large source of contribution was gone, for the superintendent had been a Catholic and generous. There was not so much to count on in the Sunday collections as there had been, and there was vastly more charity work to be done all the time. People had come to the back door of the priest's house all winter with the look of seeking sanctuary in their faces. Father Carroll always bought extra loaves of bread and kept coffee ready for anyone who might need it. It was an unstudied charity, often criticized as waste by the professional social workers who analyzed the problems of the poor in Carmine, but the priest persisted in it, even when duplications and hypocrisies among those whom he helped were clearly pointed out to him. The cost of his alms was more of a worry to him than the precise justice of them. When he ran absolutely short of money, because the fuel bill of the church pressed or the nuns who taught in the school needed a little help, or the bishop assessed him two hundred dollars for the seminary fund, Father Carroll went out as he did

today to ask for money. It was never easy for him. He made it a special act of humility.

Tom Collins, who was Martin Jeffrey's brother-in-law as well as a member of the state legislature, was one of the parishioners of Our Lady of Victory. His office was in the Grant Block and there Father Carroll sought him out. The place was, he had often been told, a political hang-out and he knew that Collins himself was not often to be found there, but was more likely to be down at the state capital. But yesterday Father Carroll had seen Collins on the street and he hoped that he was still in town. Collins had been generous before.

The legislator had the awkward and yet free manners of a boy in parochial school before the priest, though he was obviously not too glad to see him and was forcing a welcome.

"Come in, Father. Come in," he said. "Boys, I'll see you later." He gave a couple of men in the office a signal to go, and offered the priest a chair. "Well, Father, how are you today?"

"I'm very well. I won't keep you long, Mr. Collins."

Collins smelled heavily of whisky. "Worrying about my soul, Father?" he grinned.

"Not just at the moment. I came on a necessary errand. To appeal to your usual generosity."

Of course Collins had known that was what it would be. He hated to be touched for money, but he

often boasted that he never turned down a priest or a nun.

"The generosity's as good as it ever was," he said, "but I tell you, Father, I'm not feeling very flush these days. I guess nobody is."

"The town seems depressed," agreed Father Carroll.

"It's bound to be that way in a presidential year, of course. Until people know which way the cat's going to jump, they're all nervous. Money's tight, though somebody must have plenty of it. Everybody's slowed down production."

"But people have to live."

"And go to church."

The priest agreed with a grave nod of his head that ignored any pleasantry in that statement.

"Yes. We've had to make some repairs in the church, Mr. Collins. Nothing very extensive, but the pillars were weak. They were old pillars and I think they've been there since Mr. Hawley built that church."

"He did build it, didn't he?"

"So they tell me."

"He did, all right. He took out some insurance against hell that way, I guess."

Father Carroll let that pass as if he hadn't heard it.

"We have had to build new steps, too. Old people go up and down them in bad weather and we

have had a good many complaints that they were dangerous. Then we have our annual seminary collection for the education of priests."

"They ought to take care of that in the rich towns."

"They do, proportionately. Our assessment isn't large. But there's very little money to meet either these extraordinary obligations or our regular ones. So I thought I would ask some of our good parishioners for advice or assistance."

"It's too bad there aren't more people to carry the load."

"I wish there were."

"Do you get anything out of those hunkies?"

"Oh yes," said Father Carroll; "they do what they can. But so many of them are out of work."

"They don't know how long they're going to be out of work, either," said Collins, with a kind of malice, "and a lot of it's their own fault. If they'd voted as they were told all along, instead of letting some wobbly get them off the reservation, we'd have had easier sledding in the legislature for the past ten years, and less taxes. Then the mines might be all running. You can't run mines as charities."

"I know. I've heard Mr. Sanford say something like that."

There was dislike in Collins's voice, controlled by caution but audible, none the less.

"Oh yes," he said. "Sanford's getting to be quite a politician. He's going to run for the Senate."

"I hope he's going to be elected," said the priest. "I should think he'd be very valuable."

Collins shrugged. "Those things are hard to predict. Well, Father, how much will you let me off for?"

That was the hardest part of the interview for Father Carroll. He had no gift for dickering.

"I must leave that to you."

"You might lose."

"I need two thousand dollars from two hundred parishioners, Mr. Collins. And about a hundred and fifty of them can't give anything."

Tom Collins's mouth grew stingy. He wanted a cue as to what other people were giving. He was afraid that he might give too much.

"Well," he said, "I guess I can squeeze out a twenty."

He wrote a check, and as he was giving it to the priest another idea occurred to him.

"It looks as though we might have a Catholic running for President this year, doesn't it?"

"Is he going to be nominated?"

"I don't know. I kind of hope he is. Just to hear the A. P. A.'s and the Ku-Kluxers yelp. Hard man to beat, though."

"Does he have to be beaten?"

"Well—my crowd says so. How's the Church going to stand on it?"

"The Church isn't in politics," said Father Carroll.

"Would you vote for him?"

"I hear he's very able."

"That's all right, too," said Collins. "But there's a lot more in this political game than appears on the surface. Of course down at the legislature we're all supposed to be nonpartisan. But we want this district to stay Republican. We may have to convince the Governor sooner or later that it is Republican, before we get anything out of him. I hope you won't find it necessary to commit yourself too strongly, Father. Or urge anyone else to."

He was speaking now with an air of authoritative advice. The priest understood. He knew that Collins was asking him to use his influence as well as not to use it.

"If the Republicans don't go in there's going to be hard times in this country. No Democratic administration can get away with anything in the next four years," Collins pursued his subject.

"You think the thing to do is to continue the way we're going?"

"Putter along. That's the best we can do," said Collins. "Those hunkies have to be taught to follow the lead of the people who give them jobs and put

food into their bellies. That's their best bet. That's all they've got to do."

Father Carroll stood up to go and thanked the politician for his contribution.

"Always glad to do my share," Collins answered. His eyes followed the check in the priest's hands. Fifteen dollars might have done just as well as twenty. Still, he felt a fine fellow over it, and, after all, he'd cleaned up pretty well in that game last night.

As he left the office, Father Carroll met Lewis Sanford going in, and spoke to him cordially. If there was a question in Lewis's glance, he did not see it. Nor did he hear the casual, blasphemous conversation of a couple of loiterers in the hall who were also hanging about to see Collins and were tired of cooling their heels while priests and swells like Sanford walked in ahead of them. But even if he had clearly heard and seen the reaction to his presence in Collins's office, Father Carroll would not have been disturbed. He expected to be misunderstood. He had told thousands of Catholics that they must expect that and that it was not important. It was part of the miasma which surrounded their religion, but, though it was unpleasant, it was not dangerous.

He went down the street, welcomed by Mike O'Connell, the butcher, rebuffed by the secretive Polish druggist, stopping wherever he knew of

some one whose impulse to give to the church might be roused. It was late afternoon before he had nearly finished his round of calls, and he went to Marie Sanford's house last.

That was what he had done once or twice before. He got what money he could elsewhere and then went to her when there was still a deficit to be met and necessity drove hard.

The Sanford house stood a little apart from most of the others in which the families of company officials lived, and not far from the one which Deborah could not bear to give up. It was spacious but very simple, for Lewis and Marie had known how the rough background of scattered pines and red clay and cavernous mines could scoff at anything too decorative and make unusual architecture seem baroque. Quick-growing shrubs had been massed about it, and spruce and cedar trees laboriously transplanted. From the outside it looked finished and peaceful now. But Father Carroll liked most of all to enter it and find again the color and sunlight and fineness of detail which had so charmed him on his first visit. It gave him the feeling of entering a house of light. He always wanted to pause on the threshold and bless it.

The sight of an automobile parked before the house made him hesitate for a second. It was an expensive car and he had no idea to whom it belonged. It might be one of the Sanford cars or it might mean

that there were guests within. At first the priest thought he would come again, and then the pressure of a busy week ahead and the emptiness of his treasury urged him to pursue this opportunity. The house was big enough so that Mrs. Sanford could give him a quiet interview if she wished to. He hoped that she would.

The maid who answered his ring was Swedish and looked doubtfully at him as she took his message, but she came back quickly to take his hat and coat, followed by Marie herself. Marie's child was heavy now and she was dressed in a loose blue dress which made Father Carroll think of statues of the Virgin.

"Have you time to see me, child?"

"Of course I have. And I've some one I want to meet you. I've a guest who's just driven up from St. Anthony. You know who he is. Aldous Marvin, the writer."

Father Carroll knew. A great deal of publicity had been given to that spectacular conversion. He had a quick curiosity about Marvin, but he remembered his duty.

"I wanted to talk to you alone, Marie."

"Is there something you want me to do?"

She spoke so willingly that a resistance of which he had not been aware crumbled in him, a resistance to rebuff with which he had armed himself when he started out this afternoon.

"I need your help again," he said, and explained briefly.

She said: "You should have told me before about those pillars. It's really my responsibility. My father had so much to do with the building of the church that I'm sure he would want them to be restored or replaced."

It was strange how the personality of Fred Hawley persisted. Even as she spoke Marie knew that was not strictly true. She had a sudden unsought memory of her father banging his fist down and roaring at her mother, "Your priests have got their last cent out of me for that church. Pussy-footing hypocrites, the lot of them! Slaves of Rome!" Of course in the end he'd given the money. But he liked to bully the faith in his wife. It was a minor sport.

Father Carroll protested gently. "You do more than your share. That new wing at the orphanage and the farm land was a splendid gift to the parish."

"I don't do so very much. I don't think of things until I'm told. How much do you need, Father?"

"I need two thousand dollars," he said, ruefully, "and I've collected three hundred and twenty."

"Then I'm going to give you a check for the rest of it if I can subtract that well."

"You'll have my prayers, child."

"Pray for my baby," she answered. "No, pray for

me, Father! Pray that I may be good and clever—all the things I'm not! I need it."

The eagerness of the last words flared like a match and died as quickly. Marie took the priest in to meet Aldous Marvin.

Marvin was courteous. If he was annoyed or interrupted by the call of a country priest, if it interfered with any careful conversation or mood that he was building between Marie and himself, not a trace of that appeared. He quickly found a dozen subjects of common interest with Father Carroll. Easter music—the Tenebræ which Aldous had just heard chanted in one of the New York churches that Father Carroll loved—the problem of the American observation of Lent—their mutual acquaintance with a Dominican scholar—it all made Father Carroll feel as if he had suddenly awakened from an anæsthetic. In his occasional visits to the Twin Ports on diocesan errands, the talk between the priests ran on parochial problems and the bishop gave them all instructions and admonitions. But Aldous Marvin made Father Carroll aware again of the great world of the Church and with a few deft sentences reminded him of the profundity, the elegance, the incessant action, the intricacy of the Institution.

Marie was silent, leaving the talk to the two men. But Aldous did not want her to talk. He sat where he could see her. He had come a long way for that, not just from St. Anthony, but from New York. He

had come risking disappointment and he well knew it. But the persistence of his interest in her after he had gone away, the bits of information he had picked up about her and her background, the lack of enthusiasm which he had felt in further experiments with the mind of his boy *protégé*, which seemed to prove that a fresher and deeper interest had replaced that one, had brought him back. Not obviously. He had left the way of return open when he went the first time. Aldous always was careful of his entrances and exits. It was a part of his manner never to be awkward and to have all of his actions part of a scheme which worked toward a climax, instead of incidents strung loosely on a lifetime. So, as he told Father Carroll that he was writing a book which involved the comparative religious traditions of America and its hybrid heresies, he was certainly not lying. He was very much interested in any biographical data about the pioneers of the Middle West which might contribute to his subject. He had discussed these things with editors and publishers. That was one reason why he had come and why he might come again. It was his great good fortune that the Sanfords lived in part of the country which so interested him.

Yes, the book might very well be an extremely able one. As he discussed it, Aldous liked it better than ever. They talked about the places where Catholicism had taken root. There had been great,

tolerant missionary priests and bishops. He found himself telling Father Carroll about them, and the priest was vaguely ashamed that this layman should know so much more about the history of his Church than he did himself. His mind set up a defense. The parish took so much time. Deaths and births and weddings and collecting money—those were the things that ate holes in time and enthusiasms.

He lingered. He was still there, as was Aldous, when Lewis Sanford came in.

He spoke first to the priest with his usual courtesy.

"Glad to see you again, Father Carroll. Hello, Marvin! This is a surprise."

"Isn't it delightful?" asked Marie. "He drove up from St. Anthony and I hope he's staying all night."

"Not this time," said Aldous. "I must get back. But will you ask me again?"

He hadn't meant to go. But from the moment Sanford entered Marvin knew that he wasn't quite welcome. There was something in the room that gave Sanford cause for dissatisfaction. Marvin would have liked to stay and find it out, but it was too soon to be brought into even subtle conflict with Marie's husband. Better to be out of the way. All this he did not tell himself definitely. Aldous was close-mouthed even with his thoughts. But he felt it, with those nerves of his mind which were always sensitive to the moods of his companions, those nerves which had known at once that his coming today was wel-

come to Marie and that she felt him as a greater friend than their previous few meetings justified. That could only mean that she was conscious of a lack of friends, a failing of sympathy in her immediate environment.

He could not be sure, of course, but he guessed that the slight strain which accompanied Sanford into the room was because there was so much Catholicism in it. The black-garbed priest, the extra deference to his presence which rose above common courtesy, his own presence—Sanford was finding it too much for his dissenting taste, or perhaps he felt that it created a barrier between him and his wife. Marvin saw only the results. He did not know of that chance encounter of Sanford and Father Carroll outside the unsavory office of Tom Collins. He did not know that suspicions of unholy alliances were rising in Lewis at the very conversation which was going on now.

"I hear you're to be our next Senator, Mr. Sanford," said Father Carroll.

"That's far from sure," said Lewis.

"We'll all hope for it. It would be a great help to this part of the state to have it represented by able men. Mr. Collins was telling me this afternoon that most of the difficulties he encounters—taxation problems and such matters—arise from the fact that the voters up here yield to the wrong kind of influence."

Lewis hunted among the cigarettes for his own brand.

"It must be interesting to hear Collins define the wrong kind of influence."

Father Carroll was ingenuously expansive.

"He feels that the men don't understand their own interests. That they don't realize to whom they must look for food and shelter."

"That threat's been held over them a long while," said Lewis, grimly.

Aldous picked up the insinuation more quickly than the priest.

"Threats and promises are beginning to fly," he said. "Our prophecies about this next election seem to be going to come true."

"What did we prophesy?"

"That it would be bitter," said Marie.

"Yes. And I remember that Charlotte was certain that the religious issue could be discussed calmly," Aldous reminded them. "But from some of the rising gorges that I've already seen at the thought of a Catholic President and the hints of a very definite alignment on the other side I still think she's wrong."

"I'd respect the Catholics a lot more if they'd get together behind their candidate," remarked Lewis.

"What do you mean?" asked Marie.

Aldous thought that she wouldn't have said that in November. This was becoming an issue.

"I was talking to Tom Collins this afternoon." Lewis explained the name to Aldous and it evidently gave him pleasure to characterize Collins as a blackguard. "He is one of the local politicians, who has bribed and blackmailed his way around the state for years. Exceedingly corrupt. He said that he was going to vote the Republican ticket if they nominated a nigger."

"That's always the point of view of the blind conservative."

Lewis hung on to his point.

"Yes, but he's a Catholic. And he knows that in all probability there's going to be a Catholic candidate on the opposition ticket."

"But his Church doesn't tell him how to vote," said Father Carroll, "and perhaps he isn't convinced that a change of administration would be good for the country."

Lewis laughed shortly.

"He knows it wouldn't be good for him," he said, "that's his worry. He wants to keep his crowd in. They've told him the line-up. Michelson is to go to the United States Senate if he gets through the primaries. Bill Carver is to be national committeeman. Bill Carver, who's led the fight against the northern part of this state for years and is so rotten that no decent person can deal with him and smell right ever afterward. That throws out Blake, who's the first decent committeeman they've had in there

for years. That's why they're so strong for straight party stuff and why they can't support any Catholic candidate. Carver will tell them whom to vote for. It's as crooked a deal as I ever saw. They were all fighting Carver, and now they're bedfellows again."

The names were only names to Father Carroll and Marvin.

"How can you be so sure of all that?" asked Marie.

"Not from anything Collins tells me," Lewis assured her. "Whatever he says to me is sure to be a lie. But everybody on the inside knows it. Charlotte was talking about it the other day in St. Anthony."

"Is she on the inside?" Aldous inquired.

"She's too completely honest to get that far. But she knows what they're up to. The only people who don't know are the common voters. And if I get to the point of being Senator—or even if I don't—I'm going to tell them a few things. That's why I won't be elected."

"Oh, surely you will," answered Father Carroll, encouragingly.

"I'm going to have a try," said Lewis in that unaccustomed hard way. "But they think they've got me two ways. I can't get the regular machine support because I talk too much and they don't trust me to take orders. And apparently I can't get the liberal support because too many people think I'm beguiled

by your Church, Father. The ones who don't believe that I'm a Catholic think that I have to vote as my wife tells me to."

Marie flushed. There was a little fear in her glance at Lewis and more than a little resentment. It had begun to grow as he spoke so warmly of Charlotte.

"I don't care how you vote," she said.

"I know. But nobody believes that except you and me. A lot of people, from what I hear, seem to think that I'm on an allowance."

He was trying to make it absurd enough to bring it out in the open as comedy, but too clearly it had galled him. Aldous's voice came in, like peace itself, relaxed, slightly humorous, indifferent.

"It's all so involved that no matter what you do you're apt to be suspected of doing something else, and for some other reason, Lewis. It's an open season for hunting motives. Much better to laugh it off. I've always felt that one trouble with the English nation—politically and socially—was that they never could do that. Now the French and the Americans can. They're more adjustable because of it."

"How about the Irish?" asked Marie.

"Oh, the Irish laugh or they weep, and it's the same emotion in either case."

"Often true," said Father Carroll, rising. "I'm afraid I must go. This has all been very interesting."

"Wait just a minute. I've something to give you, you know," Marie told him.

She went into the adjoining library and they could see her writing a check at the desk.

"A few repairs for our little church here," said the priest, "sent me begging this afternoon."

The smile of Aldous was that of a cardinal who understood that such details existed but did not trouble about them. Lewis said formally that he was sure Marie was glad to help. He was shocked at his own irritation when he saw her giving the priest money. This is bigotry, he thought in dismay. It's none of my business. But he could not forget Father Carroll coming out of the foul office of Tom Collins on the same errand which had brought him here. He felt smirched by the connection.

Aldous Marvin, driving cityward through the spring twilight, was filled with the satisfaction of a man who has not finished the matter in hand but is pleased with its progress and can anticipate the final delight of accomplishment. He did not feel villainous. He had a deep-seated conviction that the world had always moved ahead on the impetus of masterly plots, political, religious, or emotional, and often when the three were bound closely together. The elements of a great situation were ready to his skill. There was money, which was always the great stake. Millions were at the disposal of this girl. But as things were, they were wasted. She was merely

locally rich. Her money could be made into a great international fortune, a great clerical and social power. And she herself, with her beauty and peace and gravity, had the qualities of great heroines. Aldous had only once seriously considered marriage. Now he was considering it again. He thought of it with a touch of trenchant satire as he realized that the woman in his imagination now carried another man's child in her womb. But jealousies of a passionate sort did not disturb Aldous. It suited his involved tastes to consider seducing the mind and emotions of a woman while her body was so definitely committed to another man. It was very interesting and his covetousness lacked no confidence. He was sure that if in the end he possessed Marie, he would possess her so completely that no one else would be more than a shadow to her. Aldous liked ancient love stories. He enjoyed their frankness, which was imitated in a poor way now under the self-conscious name of realism. He liked to have women motivate men, but they must remain motives.

He was quite definite in his speculations. And very practical. It was a big situation and would have to be dealt with strongly, but nothing was ever out of the question. Clerks in suburbs were frightened by the displacement of normalities, but men with no property or those with a great deal always adjusted human relations to suit themselves.

Marie's face stayed clear before him. She had

innocent eyes. Her husband, Aldous believed, had done little more to her than to give her children. If she were cared for, in climates which were suitable, in some great house in Italy or France, preferably Italy, she could bear a great many children. He caressed the idea. He had met other women who were beautiful and rich, but often they were nervous or fragile, or over-independent. They demanded things. There was a touch of the shrew about most rich modern women and Aldous would not endure that. He did not want anyone to imagine that she had any right over his life except such as he gracefully conceded. He knew that he could be a subtle lover and that there were soft ways of love that were at once delicious and binding.

Sanford, he thought irrelevantly, would be sure to want his own children and after a little Marie could be persuaded to give them up.

It amused him to see how far his thoughts had carried him, how far in advance of his actions they were. He still wanted to be a little surer that he wanted Marie before he devoted too much time and energy to getting her. He had only seen her four times. After that dinner at the Fairbanks house, he had managed a call, with an autographed book as his excuse, and that had led into friendliness. This visit had piled reassurance upon those first meetings. It had not been a mistake to think of her all these months. She had everything he wanted. If he mar-

ried anyone, it must be a rich woman. It was a tiresome life without enough money, and a limited one without a great deal. Aldous was not poor, but he did not consider his fortune large enough to share. The second requirement for his wife was that she must be a Catholic. The Church was entirely right about these mixed marriages. That had been clear this afternoon. There was no real tolerance possible in them, no order or submission. Already one could tell that Sanford and his wife were more unhappy than they realized.

There must, of course, be an annulment if possible. And it would be quite a spectacular one. That was not an unpleasing thought, either, to a man who made rather a fetich of his publicity. His conversion had been handled with dignity, but with full publicity, on two continents and it would make a climactic story to add a marriage made possible by the Church's annulment.

She would do anything I wanted her to do, he thought. A warm wave of quiet unbidden desire ran over him. He had been chaste and ascetic for quite a time, from deliberate choice. This impulse proved that he had done himself no harm. He knew that the greatest reach of the mystic was ecstasy, in which control had no part and outside of which discipline must wait.

It was quite dusk. The rays of his headlights sought out things along the road, a car parked half

in the grass, with two figures merged within it, silhouettes of passion. Farther along another automobile was stalled, a small one which had evidently been going in the same direction as Aldous's car. Its occupants were apparently unable to solve their own problems, for a middle-aged, shabbily dressed woman stood in the path of Aldous's far-flung headlights and signaled him to stop. With a slight extra pressure on the accelerator his car swerved around her and rushed on. There was no reason why he should help these people; and Aldous was preeminently a man of reason.

Chapter Thirteen

Lewis and Charlotte were lunching together in a hotel in St. Anthony. There was nothing in the least spectacular or clandestine about that fact. Many people whom they knew had seen and spoken to them without surprise, knowing that they were friends of long standing and also that they were both interested in politics and had every right to each other's company.

They were having a very good lunch. The hotel was famous for the way its chef prepared lobster and scallops and English mutton chops. But the food was hardly excuse enough for the pleasure they seemed to find in being together. Lewis spoke of it.

"I don't know when I've had such a good time. You're so satisfactory, Charlotte."

"Tell me if it means to be a compliment," she said.

"It's a very high-class one. You should know that. I might be commonplace and tell you that I like you in a red coat—as I do—or that you did a beautiful job before the primaries. Instead I put it higher yet—you're satisfactory to have along."

"There's a hint of patronage. But still I like it. I'm having a good time myself."

"Our minds track better than they used to."

"No doubt you're getting more intelligent," she suggested.

"How modestly you take praise."

"I'm not very modest," said Charlotte. "I don't believe in it. It's a very prissy trait. Used mostly to egg men on."

"Egg them on to what?"

"To excesses of flattery. Lovemaking."

"You don't think much of love, do you?"

"What's this questionnaire going to be used for?" she asked.

"Only my satisfaction."

She shook her head, but smiled at him in downright friendliness.

"I shan't fill it out for you. Why should you care what I think about love?"

"Just to add to my small collection of opinions I respect. My natural curiosity to know what happens inside of people I'm fond of. I know it's none of my business."

"Well, since you admit it, I'll be cozy and confidential," said Charlotte. "I resent love sometimes. It seems to me that, considering what it has to offer, it takes up a disproportionate amount of time in people's lives. I resent its dreadful greediness. It wants people whole, and it hasn't any earthly right

to make such demands. I hate the constant wail of the radio about it and all these catarrhal popular songs that howl about what it is and when it is and where it is."

"You don't give it a leg to stand on, do you?"

"Oh, probably I feel that way because I'm an old maid, looking at it from the outside and suffering from a lot of inhibitions I don't even know I have."

"I don't think you have so many. As for being an old maid, whose fault is that? You've turned down a lot of men. Roger Bates is hanging about like a pretty well-singed moth now."

"Is he telling everybody, the garrulous thing?"

"Only Deb, who asked me what I thought of it."

"Did you think?"

"He's all right," answered Lewis. "He's a nice fellow."

"You don't sound too enthusiastic."

"I don't like the idea of your moving to Chicago. I want you to stick around. Why don't you pick out a local boy?"

"Who? Bill Carver, maybe?" asked Charlotte, looking across the room to the table at which the untidy, gray-haired politician sat talking to a couple of other men. "It might be interesting to be the consort of the national committeeman."

"You wouldn't have much power."

"He might talk in his sleep and tell all the things I itch to know, about how he managed to make all

those delegates on the train going to the convention sell their souls before they got there. And I could always imitate a greater Charlotte and kill him in his bath. I think I may do that, anyhow. This is a bad business we're up against, Lewis."

"Don't I know it? With Carver in the saddle of the party in power, and Michelson going to the Senate, it's going to be a matter of boring from within."

"That's why you've got to be elected. Then with a little pressure you could get on the right committees and really start something. I think you have a grand chance, too. There are a tremendous lot of independent voters this year, with this Catholic issue in the field."

"But that works both ways for me. Tom Collins makes me either an ally or an enemy of the Pope, according to whom he's talking and what damage can be done at the moment."

Charlotte spoke impatiently.

"Isn't there something Marie can do to suppress him entirely? He takes most of his orders from her stepfather."

"Officially and socially both Collins and Jeffrey are friendly to me. But that's not the word that's quietly gone out. Jeffrey doesn't want me in the Senate, and I know it."

"But Marie does."

"I don't think it makes much difference to Marie."

"She could influence Jeffrey. How about my talking to her?"

He shook his head. "What could Marie do? She could tell Martin Jeffrey that I must be elected, demand it, make it a financial threat. That's the only way, and if I go at it from that angle I'm as bad as the rest of them. They've used Marie's money for electing legislators for years. I'm not going to be elected that way. There's no use in it. It defeats my purpose at the start. Surely you see that."

"Yes, I see. Still, I can't help thinking that there must be something to do that's fair enough. Is Marie interested in the national election?"

He tried to make his answer light.

"It's beginning to seem a holy war to her. They tell her things are being said about nuns, you know. It stirs her up."

"Well, you're voting on the same side."

"Yes. Right from the start, before he was nominated, I felt that it was a gesture against prejudice as well as a vote for a good man. I still want to vote for him. But you're not allowed to have a simple, friendly attitude. Everybody wants you to hate, and if it's this bad in July, with the nomination just over, what's it going to be in November? We're ankle-deep in suspicion and prejudice already and rapidly sinking."

"It's disgusting," agreed Charlotte. "I feel it among the women. Women whom I've known all

my life and thought were reasonably broad-minded are suddenly fanatics. It's a kind of hatred that's festered, that doesn't think and that certainly doesn't trust anyone. I still don't understand why a difference in religious faith should make people so bitter. If they want to go to private heavens they can go as soon as convenient, though I think a lot of them will find it a hard grade to make."

Lewis was silent. The waiter cleared their table, pushed fingerbowls before them, bowed in acknowledgment of a generous tip, and still they lingered.

"Do you see anything of Aldous Marvin?" he asked, unexpectedly.

Charlotte said that she saw him now and again.

"I can't say that I look forward to it very much," she went on. "He always makes me feel as if I had a very awkward mind. I forget verbs when he's around."

"He doesn't make Marie feel that way. He's been up in Carmine once or twice—several times now—before and after the baby's birth. I don't like him very much. He's completely civil and intelligent. He appears to be interested in the country and what's going on. But when I tell him about the mines or different grades of ore, for example, or when we talk politics, I never know what he's really thinking. He listens—I add to his information—he offers me some—but he seems a pretty cold fish. Still Marie

likes him. I wondered if he affected all women that way."

"Not me. Of course ——" Charlotte began and then plunged through a few seconds of hesitation with frankness: "Isn't it silly that I should choke up with the very embarrassment that we've just been criticizing? I was going to say that they're both Catholics. But maybe that doesn't mean there's any bond at all."

"I don't know. I can't tell," said Lewis. "God! it's a strong institution. You live in the house with it, Charlotte, and you're always right where you begin with it. It has you on its own terms."

He had never talked like that to her before and she did not offer a syllable to provoke him to further discussion. She let it rest and after a moment asked: "Shall we go? I'll get in touch with you next week about those lists of women. I'll mail them to you."

She never forgot that later moment in the little green-carpeted antechamber of the dining-room. Electric fans were blowing the leaves of some palms together and they made a queer dry sound. There was no one about.

"Shall I apologize for talking too much?" asked Lewis.

"It would be nicer if you didn't."

"Then I won't. I do count on you, Charlotte."

"Who has a better right?"

But her lightness could not make that answer trivial, though neither of them would have admitted it.

Lewis was spending a couple of days in St. Anthony. There were lines of future support he hoped to put out in several directions and he wanted to feel which way the wind was blowing. The national conventions were over and their decisions irrefutable, no matter who might regret them, and a great many conferences were going on in the state capital, where the campaigns were being planned and the lines of battle mapped out. A great many things and people were quietly on sale. Now that he was committed to the political game, Lewis found it more interesting than ever before. He was surprised at his own flair for it. The gossip, the gamble, the way men's fortunes and temperaments and livelihoods were woven together was endlessly exciting. He wanted to get this place in the Senate for himself because it would give him a foothold, a definite political rating, and take him out of the ranks of the amateurs. It was essential, and he knew it, to have a base of operations if he wished to fight for political concessions for his district.

But in addition to that he had begun to feel, even through the corruption and the survivals of a decayed patronage, the throb of new alignments, the pulse of a restless electorate. He knew that his mind,

with his slant toward the problems of engineering, would find its meat in what could be done. Things were very bad now. But the old guard was breaking up. Its crimes were numbered. What high blood pressure and angina were not doing for the older ones, drink and old age could be relied upon to finish. The old school would have to go and they had trained no one to succeed them. Left behind would be a crowd of weak men, desperately hanging on to their jobs. For a man who did not have an ax to grind, and who had enough money to be independent of bribery, the future was promising and bound up with that awakening consciousness all over the country that the politicians need not always have things their own way.

Lewis believed that he could be elected if only he could make it clear beyond a doubt that he was honest and independent. There was nothing against him and a good deal to be said for him. His residence in Carmine had been short, but it was a district in which the whole population was more or less transient, so that had not worked too greatly to his disadvantage. He had come through the primaries easily, with Johnson, the present Senator, only slightly in the lead. So far things looked well enough.

Going back to his room in the hotel an hour later, he was astonished to receive a message from Bill Carver. Carver had telephoned to say that if it was

convenient he hoped Lewis would drop in at his office while he was in town. Nothing could have been more unexpected and Lewis regarded the summons with considerable curiosity. To ignore it was insulting. To accept it could not tie him up to anything and he might learn some new things. These political meetings went on all the time, even between enemies. Lewis had an hour before he must catch the train for the north. There was just time to crowd in the interview, and he telephoned the Carver office and made the appointment immediate.

According to the legend on his office doors and his classification in the telephone book, Carver dealt in law. There were people who said that he carried more recorded opinions and judgments in his head than any other lawyer in the state. But he practiced very little and was rarely seen in court. Most of his time was spent in conferences, of which no minutes were kept, and in advising people of clever ways of evading laws instead of keeping them.

Carver was alone in his inner office. He looked tired and not very healthy. And smooth as his greeting was, his cordiality was like something he had just picked up and held in his hand, something he was weighing and appraising. He asked about conditions up north, talked of the pre-election depression in business. It was the until-ready overture.

"I see you're making a try for the state Senate, Sanford."

"That's right."

"Things looking pretty good?"

"Not bad at all. It's a little soon to count any chickens."

"It's always too soon until the day after election. That's a stubborn district up there."

"I'd like to represent it," said Lewis, equably.

"Like to see you do it," said Carver, "I think you'd be a good man down here."

Lewis thanked him without too much enthusiasm.

"It's a good year to swim with the current," Carver went on. "We're confident that the party's in good shape and going to carry everyone on the ticket along with it. As well as our friends on the nonpartisan ballot."

"Must be very satisfying to feel that way."

"Well, Sanford, I just thought that if there's anything you want me to do we might talk it over."

"There's no reason why you should do anything for me, Mr. Carver. I worked against you, you know."

Carver said, with a kind of sigh at having to be so explicit: "That water's gone over the dam. When you've been in politics as long as I have, my boy, you won't worry about what happened last year or last month or last week. It's tomorrow you've got to keep your eye on."

Lewis waited. This was plainly an attempt at

friendly conciliation. But he couldn't see what motive was behind it.

"Well, I just wanted to wish you luck. Anything the boys can do for you up there ——" Carver let that trail off into vague promise.

Lewis didn't trust him for a minute. But he knew that Carver was no fool and might only be trying to play safe, in case he came through the election. In any case, there was no use in being too finicky. Whatever the old bird is up to, he's not going to get me to promise anything, thought Lewis, and if he's decided to back me it may be because he's fed up with Johnson.

"It's very generous of you," he said. "Of course, I can use all the friends I can get. But I think a nonpartisan election has to be nonpartisan."

"Oh, sure," sighed Carver, "sure. But things may come up from time to time that need a little coöperation."

"I didn't think you thought the northern part of the state ever needed much coöperation."

Carver grinned.

"I guess we made them nervous up there, didn't we? But we won't have any tax bill that will frighten anybody next session. I told Mart Jeffrey that. Things are going to be a lot smoother."

Lewis thought that it wasn't more smoothness that was needed. Anything would be better than that.

"Speaking of Jeffrey, he's your father-in-law, isn't he?" inquired Carver.

"Yes." Lewis always hated that connection and was brief about it.

"There was another thing I wanted to mention. We want a nice representative vote from your district for the next President."

"It's a year of strong division of opinion," said Lewis dryly, "as to who that should be."

"I know. But this state's going to stay Republican. So's the country. And a lot of people will be wiser if they don't forget it. Now take it up your way. Things come up from time to time that need a little push at Washington."

"No doubt of that."

"By the way, I was wondering if Mrs. Sanford would let us use her name on our citizens' committee."

Lewis stared. "Why don't you take it up with her," he asked; "though I'm sure my wife's sympathies are with the other candidate."

"Yes, I'd heard something like that. Of course we would take it up with her directly. I know how women are. They like to feel that a thing comes straight from headquarters. But I thought maybe you could break the ice a little, you know. If you just told her that we had this little friendly talk ——"

"Oh, it hasn't been so friendly as all that," said

Lewis without raising his voice, in spite of the rush of contempt into it. So that was the trade. He was to trade in Marie's name for the machine support. "There's nothing to it, Carver. I wouldn't try to influence my wife to help you in the least."

"Of course we wouldn't ask anything of her except the use of her name."

"That's a whole lot too much. Besides, she's voting the other way. And so am I."

"You are," remarked Carver, less in question than in satirical comment. "And just how far do you expect to get in the party, Sanford?"

"Not very far," said Lewis; "but for all that I'm not going to get out of politics."

"That's as may be. This has been very interesting."

"It's nothing to what I've found it. Well, sir, I've a train to catch and not too much time to do it. Good afternoon."

His thought as he went down in the elevator was that he wished he had time to see Charlotte and tell her about the proposition. Charlotte would get all the fine points. What crooks that crowd was made of! They thought of everything, of all sorts of ways around and through and below the bush. This suggestion must have come from Jeffrey. Lewis wondered just what form of annihilation they would plan for him now. More of this underground stuff, no doubt, spreading the word to the Protestants that he was a bigoted Papist and to the Catholics that he

was a renegade from their church. He must tell Marie something of what had happened, if only to put her on her guard against any suggestions that might be made. He felt protective and tender of her as the train speeded north, and very glad that they were on the same side politically.

Since the summer heat had come on, Marie and the two children were spending most of their time at the lake, where they had bought Deborah's property in addition to their own, and remodeled it all into something like an estate. When he left the train in Carmine Lewis picked up his car and drove north on roads so familiar now that he knew each turning for miles. Forty miles north the barren mining country ran into a grateful little twist of forest, and Lewis could feel the coolness rising from the quiet lakes which lay among the trees. He began to think of other things than politics, which suddenly seemed very academic and remote. The sense of coming home grew strong, and with it came a suffusion of his mind which he did not quite welcome. He knew it was the night call of passion and love, and with it all the problems which he had laid away for a few days were on him again like wolves.

The central cottages by the lake were three, the big main one with quarters for the children and their nurses as well as Marie and himself, the smaller one for servants, and the little guest house where Lewis had been sleeping alone lately. It was

very late and the only light came from the window of the guest house. Marie had left it on for him, he thought, even though his return had been uncertain.

But when he put the car in the garage and carried his suitcase to the guest house he discovered that he was wrong. There were two rooms—a little sitting-room cheerfully furnished in linens and willow, and a large bedroom. Marie was reading in one of the beds. It gave him a shock of joy and dismay to see her there.

Always he forgot her even when he remembered. There were things like the fragrance of her hands and the sweetness of her lips which were too subtle for memory.

"It's always like kissing a baby," he said. "I think I only go away so that I can be so glad to see you when I come back. But you should be asleep hours ago. And what are you doing out here?"

"Calling on you. I couldn't get to sleep inside."

He pretended to a great ease.

"What's been happening?"

"Nothing much. Pat flops about in the water and thinks he can swim. The baby's still gaining."

"She'll be a fat woman."

"Not my child. I shan't allow it. Aldous was here today."

"Again? He's very sociable, isn't he?"

"He's studying the missionaries who came up here."

"They aren't here any longer to be studied."

"Well, he's getting atmosphere or something."

Lewis looked at her. "Doesn't he bore you?"

"No. I like the way he explains things. He always knows why."

"Or tells you why, anyway. Charlotte can't see him at all."

"Did you see Charlotte?"

"Yes. We lunched at the Van Sant. She was looking very smart in a red coat."

"Have a good time?"

"Very." He amended that, "As good as I ever have when you're not along."

"That's quite good."

"Not so very." He had slipped off his coat, taken a few things out of his bag, and came to sit down beside her on the edge of the bed, smoothing back her hair.

"Did you miss me?" he asked.

"Of course."

"You don't say that nearly violently enough. I'm beginning to be disturbed by this Aldous bird."

To his amazement she flushed.

"Is he making love to you?"

"No. He likes me."

"I thought it couldn't be the moldering missionaries. Well, so do I like you."

But after a moment he took her arms from about

his neck and folded her hands together, his mouth a little set. "Mustn't get feeling like that," he said.

"Oh, Lewis, this is a wretched way we live. I was thinking of it tonight ——"

"Of course it is. But what's there to do about it?"

"I suppose I might have another baby," she said.

"No. I won't have it. Not now. You're not nearly fit. Not for several years, my dear."

She was silent. "Well, then—let's not have a baby."

"You mean you think that's the thing to do? That it's all right?"

"I don't think it's right. But I suppose—just once ——"

He looked queerly at her and then shook his head.

"No. Better not. Run along into the house, my dear. Wrap yourself up. The grass is damp."

"You want me to go?"

"You know what happened last time. You were miserable—wretched—running to your priest, my dear, and getting forgiven. I don't know what you were getting forgiven for, exactly."

His voice was just a little harsh, for he was being harsh with himself.

"But don't you see I had to?"

"No, I can't see it. The whole thing's abnormal. There's no sin in it. We'll do our duty by the race and by each other fairly enough. We don't need out-

side advice or permission—or any damned forgiveness, either."

"Don't!"

He was tender again.

"I didn't mean that, darling. But don't you see how preposterous the whole thing is? You're bowing and scraping to an ancient Hebraic mythology. You don't think it out. If you wanted twelve children in twelve years, with your head up, I'd do my best to give them to you and bless them all. But you don't want them. You admit that you don't. You're just afraid. Afraid of the fact that some priest tells you it's wrong to use either your will or your sense."

"You don't understand."

"Maybe not. I promised to uphold you in this nonsense and I'll try to. But I do feel degraded by the idea that my relations with you—and you're my wife—can be considered as sinful or made any reason for your doing penance or being sorry afterward. It's not the way it should be."

"It's not the way it was," she murmured, drearily.

"Well, we've dodged the problem. We did, not so long ago. And you know how it made you feel."

"Oh, I wish I knew what to do!" she exclaimed. "I wish and wish ——"

"Use your reason. Other women have or they'd all be just where you are today. You're still mediæval in some ways, Marie."

"Charlotte isn't, is she?"

"Charlotte has nothing to do with it."

She slipped out of the bed and put on the little satin mules and dressing-gown that lay on the foot of it.

"Well, I'll go. I just seem to make things worse —make you unhappy."

"Darling, you don't. I can't bear to see you like this. I don't think, by the way, that Marvin's so much of a healthy influence. He's deliberately thrown himself back, you know, with all this Church stuff. I think he puts it on. Don't you?"

"Oh no! You're not fair to him, Lewis. He understands these things. He knows why they are so and why they've got to be so."

"You haven't talked to him about us—about this?"

"Oh no! Of course not!"

"Well, I don't like his mixing in your mind. Between him and the priests I don't seem to get much of you."

She looked baffled, but he wanted her so badly that he had to barricade his passion with cruelty.

"Sometimes you sound as if you hated the Church and all Catholics."

"I'm voting for one for President," answered Lewis, with a very grim humor.

"But that's just an intellectual gesture."

"Did Aldous say that?"

She turned to go without a word.

"Good night," she said at the door.

He caught up with her.

"Good night darling. I don't want to have you go. I don't want you to go."

"I told you I'd stay."

He knew he shouldn't have touched her again. Now he didn't care.

"Stay, my lovely. I don't care whether you think it's sin or virtue. Stay with me."

He didn't know when he was quite sure that it hadn't been worth it. Perhaps it was at the sight of her face the next morning when the early sun woke him first and he saw how pale she was. Perhaps it was the first glance she gave him which tried to be at ease and wasn't, which couldn't meet his laugh. Perhaps he knew when he kissed her that already she was sorry.

Chapter Fourteen

MARIE HAD A GUARDIAN angel. She was quite sure of that. In danger, in pain, when she slipped into oblivion under an ether cone at the times when her children were born, it had been Lewis to whom she had flung her love in parting from consciousness, but her angel in whom she had trusted. A spiritual shadow, something quite as tangible as some one, took care of her, could be relied upon never to abandon her. Her angel could not leave her. For his responsibility was divine.

When she was a little girl she had thought of the angel as white-winged and hovering, slipping through her window at night to keep watch as she slept, sweeping the terrors out of the darkness of the room, protecting her from jagged flashes of lightning during sudden storms. Sometimes she had been afraid of the angel, when she did anything wrong, but if there was no shame or fault in her he was a friend. Her own happiness was a reflection of angelic approval.

Even after she was older and knew that angels could not conceivably have feathered wings and that

the bird symbol was only a symbol, she had not lost her angel. He had stayed, formless, shadowy without obscurity, the guard set about her actions. He had become her conscience. She knew that she never walked quite by herself. She never felt that she was quite free to do as she chose, though often the bonds upon her were so light that they were weightless. It had become a habit to feel that gentle spirit beside her, protecting, defending, pointing the way. Her sins were his pain. She knew that, too.

Once Lewis had said, coming by chance upon that naïve belief in her mind, "I know a lot about guardian angels. I've a book about one of them."

He had pointed it out to her on the shelves in his room where he kept the books he cared enough to reread often, and she had looked at it with curiosity. But she had done no more than read the first few pages, which summed up the history of a French family in well-translated prose, when Lewis, coming up behind her, had lifted the book out of her hands.

"I guess you'd better not read it."

"But I thought you wanted me to."

"I don't. You wouldn't like it."

"Can't I find that out for myself?"

He looked at a page or two, closed the book and laid it on the nearest table.

"It would only be offensive to you, dear. Let it go."

"But you liked it."

"I think it's a marvel. But I'm a skeptic and a heathen and Anatole France wrote for such as me. Not for gracious believers."

The discussion had been broken off by something and never resumed. Marie had not been curious enough to insist on reading the book. So she never knew exactly what was in Lewis's mind on the subject of guardian angels. She held fast to her own angel and loved him.

There were other pious practices that had become part of her habit. The first thought of the day should be lifted to God, according to her convent teaching. Not with any excess of devotion, but simply and habitually. It would have seemed wrong not to do it. It would have been equivalent to the courting of disaster. She did not probe her mind for its reasons nor separate very carefully her Irish fear of supernatural vengeance and her respect for good luck from the piety of the daily offering. But deeply ingrained and entirely pious was her habit of going to church on the first Friday. She loved the first Fridays of the month. They stretched through the years, an unbroken chain of devotions. Wherever Marie was, she always went to Mass on the first Friday of each month.

She had done so until this August. But everything was different now. She could not take her sins to the confessional without a firm purpose of amendment, and Lewis had pointed out the unsurety of her own

purpose. She wanted to go. She feared not to. It was like being an outcast, like raising her hand against the law. She could no longer feel the protection of her angel, and the offering of her day to God seemed mockery. She was shadowed now by a sense of omission, by distress, by the consciousness of blasphemy. It made her fearful. Families living in sin had no luck. But she could guess what Lewis would say to that. Sometimes, even when he was not with her, she could feel his mind watching hers. That was why Aldous helped her. For he was reassuring. He did not feel that way.

Marvin had been spending a month at one of the summer hotels on the north shore of Lake Superior. He had found, he said, the exact place where one of the French missionaries had lived for a time and was perfecting the background for his description of that early life of hardship. He was going back to Europe in the fall, to write the book he had in mind. He often came to see the Sanfords and in those frequent days when Lewis was hot-foot on some political business or detained at the mines, Aldous and Marie swam in the clear blue lake and talked together and had twilight dinners. Other people came, too—friends from Carmine or from the Twin Ports, Deborah sometimes with her children. But the gap between Marie and Deborah seemed to be widening, and though it was often amusing to

hear her spar with Aldous, her presence spoiled the ease which Marie had when she was alone with him.

He made nothing hard, even when it was abstruse. He understood things that seemed unintelligible to most of the people about Marie. He knew that, rain or shine, she must go to church on Sunday in the nearest village, and that it did not matter whether the priest was Polish or Irish or German or whether there were wax flowers on the altar or whether the priest scolded violently about the scanty collections. Those things were irrelevant. The priests might sometimes be unable to talk good English and their sermons be only loosely woven prejudices, but priests were holy upon the altar. God was on the altar, even if the flowers were wax and the little gaudy statues all out of proportion. Aldous did not find that impossible to believe, and that knowledge was a comfort to Marie. He was as clever as the Sanfords, clever as Charlotte, and yet to him faith was credible.

He would talk to her about religion once in a while, sometimes almost pictorially, telling her about the cathedrals and the monasteries, making anecdotes of Church history vivid and interesting and important. More frequently he spoke of life abroad, of great people, of places in which he had visited or lived. "I would like to see you there," he would say rather often, and gradually his visions sank into her own mind. She wished once in a while that she too were going to Europe in the autumn. It would

be an escape from the things that pressed upon her here. The resistance of Lewis and his attitude toward their relations made her suffer and sometimes resentful. She told herself that she was only trying to do what was right. But though he was affectionate and thoughtful, though he shared her amusement and joy in the children, there seemed to be a wall between them that he was determined not to let her scale again. And sometimes into her wretchedness drifted the thought of Charlotte Fairbanks. Lewis would quote Charlotte, almost unconsciously. She was running the woman's end of his campaign, and doing it very well.

"I wish you weren't unhappy," said Aldous.

It was the softest of summer afternoons. There had been a bathing party, with little Pat and Deborah's children, who were spending the week-end. Deborah had followed her children back to their own cottage, but Aldous and Marie still sat on the porch of the bathing-house, watching the sun dip into the lake. Marie had changed her bathing-suit for a white sleeveless dress and sat with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, looking bronzed and supple and slim and very thoughtful. When the children were there she had believed that she was happy, but now that they were gone she found she wasn't. All day she had wondered why Lewis hadn't come back last night as had been ex-

pected. He had wired, of course, but he hadn't given any reasons for the delay.

"Unhappy? What makes you think I am?" she asked, stiffening against that sudden question.

"You push me away, don't you?"

"No. But I thought we'd been very gay."

"You are gay—but not happy."

This time she did not contradict him.

"Oh, well," she answered after a minute, "perhaps that's the way things have got to be."

"I don't think so."

"I mean for me."

"I'm thinking of you, too."

"I'm not unhappy. There's nothing to make me so."

He said quietly: "Don't you think that's an unnecessarily formal defense? You're in one of the most difficult positions in the world."

"I can't talk about it. It isn't as if it were just my problem."

"No. Your problem can't be laid at the door of any individual. History's been building it up for centuries."

It was a subtle path into her confidence. He abstracted everything, made it possible to talk with no violation of privacy.

"It's nothing you can blame anyone for," she said.

"Not unless you can blame people for their heredity, for their temperaments, or for the enormous dif-

ferences in their habits of thinking, in ways of looking at life, which were born in them. And those things are beyond personal responsibility."

She came back to his first statement.

"Why did you say I'm unhappy? Is it so obvious? Do I act that way?"

"No. But perhaps I see it more clearly than other people might because I'm so concerned that it should be so. Because I can understand these things that trouble you."

"Don't let's talk about them."

"That," he said, gently, "is the refuge of children, and people who sulk."

"But what's the use of talking when nothing can be done?"

"Something can always be done, except where there's death," said Aldous; "that's the only real human impasse."

"And why should you care what I feel, anyhow?"

"Because I care about you," said Aldous.

It was amazing that he could draw the poison out of those words. They did not seem a confession of illicit love. Marie knew that he was telling her that he loved her, saying the whole thing. She knew it from dozens of preliminary phrases which, taken by themselves, meant nothing. And yet, as he said it, there was nothing in his voice or words that conceivably one person, man or woman, might not say to another without offense. He made it impossible

for her to resent his statement, so gently was it made, with no effort to follow it up with as much as a touch of her hand. But it had been said.

"You're awfully good to me," she answered.

"I'd like to help you."

She shook her head. "What can be done, Aldous," she asked, "if you marry a man because you love him and then find that you can't make him happy? Not because you don't want to! Oh, I can't explain. But suppose that neither of you can change and you've caught some one else as well as yourself into a kind of trap. It doesn't help to see it or to be sorry. Because if you're a Catholic there's no way out."

"Are you so sure?"

"You can't get a divorce. You're tied forever. It doesn't seem fair that freedom should be right there for some people and out of the question for others."

"But the Church isn't as rigorous as all that, Marie. I'm just talking for the sake of argument, because I can't believe things are as bad as you think them. But surely you know that it allows separation in cases that justify it."

"Oh, that! That doesn't help. It's a refuge for women whose husbands beat them or are cruel or for men with intolerable wives. But what good would it do a man like Lewis? It wouldn't set him free and he wouldn't free himself. Even if I gave him grounds I don't think he'd divorce me, though of course he's not

a Catholic and could. But he wouldn't accept a freedom which I couldn't share."

He was close upon every word that she spoke, quick to note that it was a man's freedom that gave her concern and not a woman's. That of Lewis and not her own.

"But there are such things as annulments, too."

"Not if you've been regularly married."

"I don't know what you mean by regularly. Of course a legal marriage is something for the courts to untie or not. That's in the human jurisdiction and the Church doesn't interfere there. But it says that marriage is a sacrament."

"That's just it."

"And a sacrament has to be understood and fully complied with to be effective. You know. The sacrament of penance, for example, can be apparently conformed with and yet be actually void, if a person deliberately conceals sin or lacks contrition. It's the same thing in marriage. There's such a thing as defective consent, which can make a marriage morally and canonically invalid. If there's been coercion and a woman has been forced to marry a man ——"

Marie laughed. "Forced!" she exclaimed.

Aldous went on.

"Or if there's been fraud of any sort—and there are unconscious as well as conscious frauds—annulment is within the discretion of the Church. The layman doesn't always understand that. Even the

Catholic layman doesn't. That's often because he doesn't see the deep significance of the sacrament and the many elements that have to enter in if it is to be truly binding, truly effective. It's very interesting, and important. That's the reason why the Church keeps these things in its own hands and only allows its wisest minds to deal with them. If there is argument or indecision, the highest authorities of the Church alone can say whether the sacrament of marriage has been truly administered and received."

"And it's rather hard to get to them," said Marie, with faint sarcasm.

"It's not impossible."

She stood up, passing her hands down her slender hips as if she were shedding the discussion.

"What nonsense we're talking!" she said. "I must go in. My stepfather left a long-distance call for me and I must see if they've got it through yet. Something's been wrong with the telephone lines all afternoon. You'll stay for dinner, Aldous?"

"Yes, if I may—and you want me."

"Of course I do. I don't know whether Lewis is going to turn up or not. Deborah said that she might or might not come over. It will be a Mad Hatter and March Hare tea party from the looks of things. You and I will have to eat at all the vacant places. But do stay. I'll see you later and you know your way around."

His eyes followed her, and as she grew more dis-

tant the covetousness in them seemed to be clearer, less obscured by discretion. Whenever Marie, in a black bathing-suit, stood poised upon a diving-board, Aldous did not take his eyes from her. For all his knowledge of things spiritual and his pride of intellect, he had a deep appreciation of what joy and power there was in the body. He was still on the porch of the bathing-house when he saw a travel-dusty car come up the drive and stop by the house. Lewis and Charlotte Fairbanks got out of it. They were much amused with something they were talking about. Or perhaps with each other. That, too, did not escape Aldous.

Dinner, which was picturesquely simple in the country, was served at a long table set on the veranda of the main cottage. There were green mats and a great bowl of orange calendulas for decorations, and as the dusk began to thicken, short, fat candles in pewter holders burned against it, capriciously lighting up one face and then another. There were five of them. Deborah had come for dinner when she heard that Charlotte had arrived with Lewis. Aldous sat beside Marie.

It seemed to Marie that nothing was being said that meant anything, as if nothing in the world had meaning except the pain and fear that would not leave her alone, not for a minute. Lewis was back, but he had not come back to her. When he had kissed her it wasn't as if he had held everything in

her heart and her mind close to him, the way it used to be. His kiss had been no more than a caress. He had come and he had brought Charlotte Fairbanks with him. To give Charlotte a rest for a day, he had said, but Marie believed that it was because he did not want to be without her. It was all strange and cruel. Things are like this, she thought, because I am not leading a good life. I am being punished. She remembered with frightened remorse that this was the first Friday of August. All day she had pretended to forget. For she had not gone to church, not this morning, nor yesterday in preparation.

Charlotte was amusing. She held the conversation balanced on her wits. She was describing the way a man called Watts had tried to bribe her, and even Aldous was laughing. Marie laughed, too, for she had not been listening to the story. She had been thinking that there was more vitality in Charlotte than usual, not just mental energy, but some physical animation that seemed to come from and give her happiness. Suddenly Marie was jealous. She hated the way Lewis leaned toward Charlotte, amused, admiring, reminding her to tell something more, ready with applause. She wanted to break into the conversation, and she did.

"I had a very pressing invitation to get into politics this afternoon," she said.

That deliberate intrusion of herself did not sound

like Marie. It brought everyone's attention full upon her.

"You should take an interest if you're going to be a Senator's wife," remarked Deborah.

"What kind of an invitation?" asked Charlotte.

Lewis said, "Who's been after you?"

"Martin," answered Marie. "You know, Charlotte. My stepfather."

There was a second's pause and nobody seemed to know what to do with it. Marie went on telling her story.

"He wanted me to go on some kind of committee—for his candidate for president. I told him I was voting on the other side and he scared the life out of me. He said I'd hurt your chances, Lewis—that you needed the regular party support. Martin knows everything about politics."

Charlotte looked at Lewis. He had told her about the proposition that Carver had made to him, and so obviously this was another way of getting at it. But Lewis's glance was on his wife.

"What did you tell him?"

"I said I'd have to think about it. Naturally——"

"You mean to say you didn't turn that down cold!"

His tone was affronting. Marie's chin went up.

"It was a question of what effect it might have on your election if I did."

"But," said Lewis, with a quiet voice that was not

gentle, "I understood that you had a principle about voting the other way."

"Certainly I want to vote the other way. There's no reason why a Catholic shouldn't be President. And all these things they drag in about the Church are all untrue. They're just malicious lies. They're slander!"

"Then you can't very well go on a committee on the side that's doing the slandering."

"I suppose not. I certainly don't want to. But of course it's just one vote—one among millions. And I thought that if having my name on that committee would help you to be elected ——"

"I'll get along without the help of your name under those circumstances," said Lewis. "You'd better stay by your Church, my dear."

"I don't think that question's involved, is it?" asked Aldous.

The candlelight did not show how pale Marie was. Aldous, close beside her, saw the tragedy of pride and repudiation in her face and her catch at control. He thought, she's superb in pain.

"Is everyone ready? I can't quite see in this light. Shall we go?" asked Marie, rising.

It was still warm. Impatient flashes of lightning harassed the sky. There was a desultory game of contract bridge for a couple of hours. The two men, Deborah and Charlotte, played while Marie went to see that the children were asleep, and when she came

back she made no objection to cutting in. She played smoothly, well, as if her mind were on the game. She was inscrutable, even to Aldous.

He possibly saw that the evening was reaching an impasse, for it was rather early when he said that he must go. He offered to take Deborah home, but she preferred to walk, and Charlotte decided to go with her and spend the night in that cottage. So at last Marie and Lewis were left by themselves, in the intimacy which had ceased to be intimacy.

He tried to be casual, but the things he said did not seem to touch her. It was as if she were too absorbed to hear them, even when she answered.

"I'm sorry that I was so abrupt about that business at dinner, Marie," he said at length. "Of course you couldn't have known what was involved, or that they'd put the same thing up to me and I'd thrown it in their teeth before they came crawling around to you."

"No, I didn't know."

"It seemed to me that the corruption was clear enough, right on the face of it. And if you have a political conviction, the only decent thing to do is to stand by it."

"I suppose I haven't much political conviction."

"No. I rather wish you had."

"I can't feel that it's as important as all you people seem to think it is. It's just part of living, and even living is only part of something else."

"I don't think one can excuse rotten politics by putting the emphasis on a questionable eternity," said Lewis, dryly.

"I know you don't like Martin. I never have liked him, either. But he was my mother's husband and he was pretty good to her. She was better off with him than with my father."

"Maybe. But politically Jeffrey's a bad influence in the whole state," said Lewis. "And the thing that galls me is that it's your money which makes his power possible. It's through his connections with you that he's become important."

"I can't help that."

"No, I suppose not. The thing twists back too far. It can't go on indefinitely, anyway. It's been given enough rope to hang itself and that's what's going to happen. People are going to want new leaders, a new kind of mechanism. But all that's irrelevant and you're not interested. I only started to say that I needn't have spoken that way to you ——"

She checked his defensive apology.

"It doesn't matter. Lewis, I think I'm going abroad. Very soon."

"You want a change?" he asked, after another minute.

"There must be a change. I'll have to take the children, I think."

It was so still that they could hear the water lapping against the pier. Heat lightning drove curious

apparitions through the sky. Both of them knew that this quiet moment was crisis and their hearts were numb. They were shy, as if they had never known each other. Lewis knew what his wife meant. She was saying that she was leaving him.

"Of course you must have the children. They must have you," he said. "Where will you go?"

"I don't know. France, I think. Paris, perhaps. If I could get somewhere to live near a park, the children could play there. French children are so gay."

He did not answer that irrelevance.

"Charlotte could make you happy, Lewis. I see that now. I saw it tonight. You're closer to her than you are to me."

"Charlotte? What do you mean?"

"You ought to marry Charlotte some day. You'll want to. And so will she. She's lucky, isn't she, just to have to think of what she wants and not of what she must do!"

"You're talking nonsense, Marie! What's got into your head? Of course I'm fond of Charlotte. But why should I marry her? And how could I if I ever should want to?"

"You aren't a Catholic. You could divorce me."

"On what grounds? You know that's nonsense."

She hesitated and he spoke with finality.

"No, I'll not ask for a divorce."

"Then perhaps we can get an annulment."

"Annulment!" he repeated. "What are you talking about?"

"People do sometimes."

"We couldn't."

"I'm not sure. Aldous ——"

He was suddenly charged with anger.

"Aldous! So that's it! He's talking about an annulment for us, is he? Isn't that priceless? He's just the fellow that would think of that. So that's the kind of tripe he's been feeding your mind on. No wonder you can't see straight in a matter of simple honor. Annul our marriage! That's the way it's going to be done. You can't go honestly into a court and ask for a divorce, but you can sneak off to Rome and buy an annulment. And I suppose you and Aldous have it all fixed up for afterward. What a superb Church you belong to!"

"I want you to leave the Church alone," said Marie, steadily.

"I have left it alone. I've left it alone until I've lost my own self-respect. It's the Church that's not left me alone. It's spied upon me in my own house. It won't let me have my wife except on its terms. Even that I've put up with. But to see you always taking direction, not daring to call your mind your own, refusing to reason, under discipline like a servant, is the worst of it. You just do what some one tells you to do, whether it's the priest or Jeffrey or Aldous Marvin!"

She had a terrible sense of having no refuge. There was no God back of her to turn to, no guarding angel now. She could not tell her husband that only today she had affronted God for him, neglected her Church, let her angel drift sadly into distance, his wings weighted with her sins and her intention of further sin. There was nowhere to turn. She kept on standing there after Lewis went away.

BOOK FOUR

Chapter Fifteen

EVERYBODY PASSED BY. It seemed to Marie that if she could only stay long enough in her iron chair in the garden of the Tuileries, all the people in the world might pass in front of her. They went about their business with the temperamental haste of the French that has no hurry in it; they stretched out their idleness in the manner of people adrift in foreign countries; they looked as if tragedy were at their very heels; they looked as if they were eager for dinner; they looked old, rich, secretive, indigent, criminal, benevolent. They were so many and so unrelated that they did not press upon thought. A Japanese boy sat on the next bench, as immovable as if he were carved of wood. Near by an old woman folded newspapers and opened them out again. Marie could see people so concentrated that they seemed to be sucking memory dry, and others who appeared to be in apathy. It was a comfort not to know anything about them and yet to have them there. It spread the responsibility of living thinner.

At first the change had been sedative enough. The

remembered beauty of Paris was actual again. The details of superintending the children's care during the voyage, the problem of settling them comfortably, had been absorbing. It was fair enough to tell her thoughts that they must wait. And when the drugs of motion and distance began to wear off, the setting she had found had made her feel that she was waking to satisfaction. High-ceilinged rooms, old wood, many mirrors, gray shutters through which the light told no tales—she had been lucky enough to find something rather fine for herself and the children. Aldous had really found it. He had known the American who had remodeled the house without spoiling it and was not going to live in it this winter. A man of taste, a writer and a wealthy one, had chosen all the furniture, collected the mirrors, employed the cook. It was fortunate, because the house was charming and because the Parc Monceau was so close for the children. Pat loved it there. He had a hoop and a windmill on a stick and there were more children than he had ever seen, playing with their nurses and one another in the park. Marie often went there to watch him and the baby, but today she had left them with the nurse and she did not want to go back to them yet. The world did not stream through the Parc Monceau as it did through the garden of the Tuileries, where the ground was powdered with dust and tattered leaves from the chestnut trees.

She had been fitting clothes. The vendeuse, the fitter, the modiste had all stood about her, draping folds of chartreuse-colored velvet with agreement and dissension that scarcely seemed to concern her. The dress would be satisfactory. She knew that, and so did they. But it was their business to make a fuss about it, to dramatize clothes as if they were life. They had shown her lengths of brocade shot with silver and flaked with gold for a wrap, and she had chosen among them deftly and precisely. For a moment that had seemed important, just as in the last month it had sometimes seemed important to have chrysanthemums that were the color of rust in her hired yellow *salon*, or to go to the opening of the Théâtre Pigalle with Aldous and have people bow to him and stare at her.

But those things did not matter, and she knew it. What she was trying to be sure of, sitting there in her ten-centime chair, was that nothing mattered very much. When there were so many people, one more woman in the garden of the Tuileries did not count, and whatever she did was without significance. Her actions were lost in the vague, general gesture of all living. She thought, if I can only feel that, it will be so much better.

A passing man struck memory alight in her mind. He looked like her father, heavy, powerful, roughened, on his way to do what he pleased. Whether her father was wrong or right, she thought, he had been

in authority over his own doings, had been the only one to give his life orders. He had been his own judge. Or had he even bothered with judgments? Penalties had meant so little to him that he must have been equally indifferent to the opinions of justice. Marie wondered if his taunt to the world had not been the same as his taunt to her mother, that it lacked courage to prospect new country, to demand wealth of it, to defy God, to drink itself to death at pleasure.

"Excuse me," said a voice beside her, "I walked by and then I came back. I couldn't be sure. But it is Marie Hawley, isn't it?"

"Why, Nellie!" exclaimed Marie, rising quickly.

This was one of the people who had passed, whom she hadn't really seen, this plump young woman with the fresh, new, expensive clothes, accompanied by the plumper, middle-aged man who was chewing his cigar with a trace of embarrassment until he saw what might come of this encounter. Nellie Muldeen Floyd had drifted through the garden of the Tuileries, and with her there came to Marie a sudden, almost physical sense of a convent study-hall and a desk with a top that lifted, as well as a memory of something distasteful Nellie had once said about the intimacy of marriage.

"I couldn't be sure. I said to Joe—you remember my husband, of course. I told you it was Marie Hawley, Joe! I said to him that you looked so

French, and of course he's always afraid that I'll go right ahead and do something I shouldn't." Her breath caught with a giggle. "He didn't want me to stop, but I said it would be just like you, Marie, to be sitting here by yourself. How are you, anyway? And what are you doing in Paris?"

"I'm living here just now. I've a house."

"Now what a pity we didn't know it!"

"I'm so glad to see you, Nellie. You must come to visit me, you and Mr. Floyd."

Nellie sighed in exasperation. "Isn't that just the way things are! To run into you like this when we have to catch a boat train in less than two hours. We just came out for a breath of air and because in these hotels they all stand around to be tipped no matter how much you've given them. And Joe's so generous they just impose on him. I always say he overdoes it. Marie, tell me all about yourself!"

"I think you should postpone your sailing," said Marie, "and give me time."

"I wish we could, now that I know you're here. But you see we didn't bring any of the children and we cabled and they'll be expecting us. Besides, Joe's just fussing and fuming to get back before election. He'd probably die if he didn't get in the game this year. Of course he has so much influence."

Joe grinned. "I wish I had about a thousand times as much this year," he said. "I could use it."

"Isn't it too terrible?" said Nellie. "Isn't it dread-

ful the way they're attacking all of us Catholics! As if a Catholic wasn't as good as anyone else. I guess a Catholic would look just as dignified in the White House as some of the people they've had in it! It's not what they say in the open that I mind so much, but these letters they send around, talking about the priests and the nuns; and they say that if a Catholic is elected he'll be assassinated in twenty-four hours."

"Oh, I don't take much stock in that," remarked Joe. "They'd take care of that, all right. Look here, Nellie, you're blocking all the traffic of Paris. Why don't you and your friend come back to the hotel or that nice café on the corner and have one last drink in France?"

"I told you that you'd had that last drink," Nellie reminded him, though without strictness, "but this certainly is a special occasion. Couldn't you do that, Marie?"

Marie hesitated, with a glance at the platinum-and-diamond guide on her wrist. Aldous was coming to her house this afternoon. He would be there in half an hour.

"Now I'm more important than anything else," Nellie urged her. "This is my last minute. You can come along with us for a little while."

"Of course I'm coming," said Marie, cordially.

They sat among little potted trees in the café and Joe Floyd had another last drink with no great air of finality, and told just how he managed to get any

kind of liquor he wanted to get in New York. Nellie asked questions. They were friendly questions, but they made a pattern of curiosity. She wanted to know how old Marie's baby was now, what the names of both children were, why she was in Paris.

"And how's your stepfather? Mr. Jeffrey, wasn't it?"

"He's not very well. Since I've been here I've heard that he's had to go to the hospital. His secretary wrote me. There's something quite wrong with his heart and I'm afraid they think it's serious."

Nellie was only mildly condoling, since the relationship was not one of blood, and Marie spoke without deep feeling.

"Is your husband here with you?"

"No. He's in Carmine. And in St. Anthony, part of the time."

"It must be so lonesome for him. How is he?"

"I think he's very well."

Nellie caught that. Wives did not think their husbands were well if things were as they should be, if they were normal. They knew how they were with the great accuracy which was the natural imprint of great intimacy.

"Is he joining you?"

"I don't expect him," said Marie.

She knew that Nellie would see with the penetration of the married woman that a wife with an eight-months-old baby would not leave her husband

with such indefiniteness unless there was something wrong. The gleam of a thwarted inquisitiveness that did not care to press further was in Nellie's eyes.

Marie turned the talk, to ask Nellie about her own travels and if she had been having a good time.

"Oh yes. But I'll be glad to get home. Europe's beautiful and all that, but of course I'd seen it before. It isn't as if it were my first trip. Joe never would come until this year. I simply had to drag him. He hates sight-seeing. All he could say about Notre-Dame was that he'd hate to be chairman of the building fund for that church."

"I guess building was a lot cheaper then than now," said Joe.

"You ought to be thinking of the beauty of an old place like that," his wife told him.

Joe's last drink was making him companionable.

"I tell you what got me," he said to Marie. "Did you ever see anything like the way those Frenchmen will split up a dime in three or four collections?"

"Joe put in a hundred francs and they nearly fainted. Of course at home he always gives ten dollars every Sunday."

"Can't get off for less," Joe explained his generosity. "Father McEachin would be right on my trail."

"He's a great friend of ours," said Nellie. "He comes to the house so often and is so fond of the

children. You know my oldest girl is almost ready for school, Marie. She'll be going to the convent before I know it. And I'm certainly going to send her there. I'd hate to have her in one of these fashionable schools where they learn nothing but a lot of snobbishness. I want my children to have their religion come first and not to be ashamed of it!"

Marie thought that Nellie's children would probably be rather belligerent about their religion if this was the key of their upbringing. There was something very defensive in that attitude which insisted without provocation that it was not ashamed. Nellie had never seemed quite so fluently bigoted, quite so definitely clannish as today. She had a chip on her shoulder. As she talked on, it was clear that a social and religious tangle bewildered Nellie. She had evidently not made certain advances socially and was compensating herself with the certainty of holiness and salvation.

"You know I've never met your husband, Marie," said Nellie.

"No."

She would not tell more, not if they battered at her for hours. She considered what Lewis would have thought of Nellie. She could imagine the rather critical tolerance in his manner as Nellie went on and on, saying things through which the meanings showed like too-bright linings through flimsy material. Lewis would have found Nellie amusing. Marie

thought, if I hadn't lived with Lewis, would I see Nellie quite so clearly?

"It's too bad you won't be back to vote," said Nellie. "Do you want to send your vote by me?"

Marie laughed. "It would be hard to smuggle that in."

"I guess there'll be plenty of ballot-boxes stuffed before this campaign's over. Does your husband take any interest in politics, Marie?"

"Oh yes! A great interest."

"I suppose he's on the other side, though."

"No," said Marie, understanding instantly what was meant.

"Really? Isn't that fine? So many broad-minded Protestants feel that way. Or has he—come over to the Church?"

"No."

Nellie's glance was shrewd and penetrating. She wanted to know. She'd do everything she could to find out. But she was not unkind. Joe Floyd was furtively looking at his watch.

"I must go," said Marie. "This has been ever so nice, Nellie. Like old times."

Nellie was instantly sentimental. She kissed her friend warmly. "Do let me hear from you, Marie. I feel so queer, running into you like this, just before we're sailing. I'm always jumpy, anyway, when I'm going on the ocean. You never know what's going to happen. There are such dreadful wrecks and acci-

dents. And a woman at the hotel was saying that we'll strike the stormy season. Say a prayer for us, won't you?"

But Marie knew, as she left them, that she would not say a prayer for Nellie's safe passage. She could not believe at the moment that God—the God whom Lewis had rationalized somewhat for her—would listen to any supplication about good weather for the Floyds. The best she could do was to stop at a florist's and order orchids for Nellie, to be sent with all speed to the boat train. Then she went home.

Aldous was waiting, as she had known he would be. He did not like to wait. It subtracted something from his dignity, lessened his importance. Nor was any greeting, into which impatience had crept, quite so perfect as its anticipation. He had decided before Marie came in that she must learn not to do this to him. Yet there was nothing petulant in his manner as she entered the yellow drawing-room. There was only question and a clever turn to his greeting.

"Do you think I need to be made eager?" he asked.

He had kissed her before. If his touch was still unfamiliar to her, that was because she seemed to be unable to find intimacy any more. Except when she was with the children, it seemed to be a quality that was lacking in everything. This high room, with its old furniture that had belonged to the intimacies

of other people, was only accidentally hers. She liked to be in it because she liked its shape and color, but she made no personal claim upon it. It did not belong to her.

As for the caresses of Aldous, she accepted those, too, as if they were not quite hers. She supposed sometimes that she must be a depraved woman because she did not mind them more, because occasionally she was even glad to have them. In all his passion for her Lewis had left her with no conviction of sin, no sense of corruptibility. But Aldous was different. He made the flesh only flesh, admitted it, reminded her of its necessities, its tendency to sin. He seemed to like to have it so. More than once he had talked to her of the desires and joys of the body and discussed that point at which nature, turning upon itself, became sinful. Marie felt that he was probably right. He was right about so many things. If, when he kissed her like this and made her far more conscious of being a woman than a beloved person, if it was that to which she responded, she could easily believe that it was the animal in her, the lower nature. Aldous liked to take all the responsibility for exciting it. He pressed her sometimes to admit feeling. She hoped that if he kissed her often enough she would get used to it, be so thickly overlaid with his caresses that her memories would stifle and she would not have these dreadful nights twisted with spasms of loneliness, these agonies of

being shut forever out of a cleaner world, these phantoms of remembrance of what Lewis had been like, what he had said and done, these fancies of what he might be like now with Charlotte. Marie was very tired of being haunted, and grateful for anything Aldous could do to stop it.

"I'm sorry. I met some friends. The Floyds from New York. Nellie was at school in the convent with me and I visited her family in Westchester one summer. She married a Tammany politician. We all went to a café and then I stopped to send her some flowers."

"Are they staying in Paris?"

"They were just leaving. I was sorry. I should have liked to give them a good time. They're the sort that like to see things."

Aldous was not interested. "That's what most of them come for. Leave people like that to the American Express. I wouldn't be too hospitable if I were you, or you'll be over-run."

She glanced about the still corners of her drawing-room.

"Am I so hospitable?"

"You're going to be. To people who are worth the trouble. You must let me help choose them. But just now I've wanted you to myself. It's made me selfish. I was thinking of that today when I saw in the Paris *Herald* that some Hawleys from Philadelphia are at the Crillon. Are they relatives of yours?"

"Probably my uncle and aunt. They're often here at this time of year."

"You'll want to see them, won't you?"

"I'd much rather not."

"Don't you like them?"

"Yes, I do. But it means more explaining ——"

"Still you'll want to explain to some people. You'll want some backing."

"What do you mean?" she asked, her head suddenly high, her voice challenging.

He laughed. "I certainly didn't mean to excite so much drama. Only that elderly relatives can be useful. I certainly shan't insist on pressing yours upon you. But tomorrow I want to take you to tea with a friend of mine. A rather grim lady but an important one."

"Must I?"

"Yes. She might be valuable to us. She's the friend of archbishops. She's close to some of the people whom we want to help us."

"With what?"

"With your annulment."

She took off her hat and tossed it on a chair. He thought that she looked like a schoolgirl in that dark, straight *tailleur*. It was like a contact with innocence. Tomorrow she must wear that—and gardenias.

"Smile at me," he said.

She tried it.

"Much better. But you seem tired. Did seeing those people bother you?"

"Oh, a little, perhaps. It's hard to be reminded of what you can't be again. Nellie wanted to know all about me. She had so many questions."

He was concerned. He drew her down beside him on the high-backed damask sofa, kissed her neck and caressed her hands, gently but possessively. She seemed so nearly his now that sometimes Aldous found waiting both difficult and unreasonable.

"Listen to me, dear. I want to talk to you."

"What about?"

"Ourselves."

She stirred. "Sometimes I think I can't be any good to you, Aldous. I'm so dull."

"I must be the judge of that," he said, and took possession of her lips.

It stirred her a little. She thought, there's no doubt that I'm corrupt. Any kiss would do that to me. Or am I falling in love with Aldous? It would be better if I did. But perhaps it doesn't matter. I can go ahead, anyway.

"You oughtn't to kiss me like that," she said, withdrawing herself. "After all, we aren't married."

"A man isn't always master over himself."

She wished he wouldn't make her feel like a cause, an occasion of sin.

"What did you want to talk about, Aldous?"

"About getting things started. You're all settled

now, and that was the first thing. But the situation needs regularizing. You don't want to live in an anomalous position."

"It doesn't matter, does it?"

"Of course it does. To you"—he was about to add that it mattered to him, but, considering her mood, he chose another argument, as one might choose a sharper and more deadly rapier—"and to Lewis. He's left the matter to you. You told him you were going to try to have your marriage dissolved."

"Yes, I told him."

"Perhaps he's counting on it."

That hurt, and Aldous knew it. But he did not mind giving her pain if she would come to him to ease it. And to whom else could she go now?

"Lewis could divorce me. I left him."

"You think he's likely to?"

"I know he won't. No, I'll do it. You send me the lawyer you've told me about. I'll see him any day."

"I will. I'll have him come to you here. It will be better, of course, if I don't bring him—if, on the whole, I'm not mentioned. But that, of course, is only part of it. You may be able to get a divorce with no trouble—you will, of course, considering Lewis's attitude. But the important thing is the annulment. The divorce will only legalize your standing and give you full rights over your property again."

"Lewis never asked for my property ——"

"Still, there were contingent rights. He had an interest in your estate, you know. However, you can safely leave those things to your lawyer. But the divorce is only the provision of the law for your freedom. The important thing is to have the Church grant you the same freedom, and that is what I have been closely considering."

She could not guess how closely. She could not see how that deft mind slipped through the tangles of the situation with its objective constantly held in view, the objective that would make him husband of a beautiful woman, protector of an immense fortune, both secretly and publicly given his delights and his triumphs.

"Why do we bother with that annulment?" she asked. "The divorce would be enough to give Lewis his freedom."

"Surely you haven't forgotten that the Church doesn't recognize divorce."

"No; but perhaps if I just lived here quietly with the children and tried to be good everyone would understand that I meant to do the right thing."

"Don't talk nonsense! You're not going to live here with the children for very long. As soon as may be, you're going to live with me. It's rather foolish that you hold me at such a distance now."

"That," she said, "would be mortal sin. It's wrong

even for you to touch me while I'm the wife of another man."

"Yes, but the Church has forgiven such sins for countless years."

There was something outraged in her answer. "You mean to say that you'd ask me to be your mistress now and expect us both to be forgiven when we wanted to ask for it? No, I'm not that kind of person. I'm not a harlot. I rather expect that I may feel like one when I marry you, Aldous, but that's soon enough."

He did not like that resistance, that sudden insult. She was not, he was finding, as pliant as he had thought. But she was even more desirable than he had guessed. The touch of her body, the imagination of her submission, sometimes almost exhausted his control.

"You talk as if you didn't care for me, Marie. And you know that you mean everything to me and that I'm only concerned with your happiness."

"I'm sorry. I told you that I'd marry you and I will. How do I get this annulment?"

There was a look in her face that no one had ever seen there before. But men who were now dead had seen it on the face of Fred Hawley when his back was against the wall. He could go through with anything if he had to.

"Well, the thing is to prove to the Church that there was no valid marriage. It's a little difficult in

one way. You were of age, of course. And you still believe that you were not coerced in any way?"

"I wanted to marry Lewis more than anything on earth," she answered, with memory alive in her voice.

"That was passion. No doubt it blinded you to what was bound to transpire later. He probably took advantage of it. But there's another point. The Church requires those who participate in mixed marriages to enter into certain agreements."

"I know all that, Aldous. Lewis did agree—to everything."

"Yes, but it has to be done in good faith. I haven't been able to get the advice that I want. But if Lewis's consent in marriage was fraudulent in regard to the conditions the Church imposes, that may help."

"How do you mean?"

"I mean that he's not in sympathy with Catholicism. He doesn't like the Church, does he?"

"From what he said I think he despises it," said Marie, thoughtfully.

"Exactly! That's what I mean. I'd like to make it clear that from the first he's objected to your religion and made it difficult for you to act as a Catholic woman should."

"I didn't say that ——"

"Just a minute, dear." Aldous did not like interruptions and sometimes did not tolerate them. "Let's

be specific. He didn't approve of your going to Church every Sunday, perhaps."

"He thought it was silly if we were in the country or something like that."

"Didn't he ever object to the fundamental rulings of the Church on marriage relations? Say they were wrong or preposterous?"

She flushed. "Yes, there were some of them."

"That's what we want to think of. It's such points that need emphasis. I wish you would think it all over carefully. Perhaps make notes of some of the times Lewis opposed different practices of your faith in contradiction to what he had promised when he married you. Do you see? Of course I can't be sure that we can get an annulment on that ground. But I am sure that what we want to do is to assemble the facts, get the best advice, and then take it up with the proper authorities. We shall want, you see, to show an intention of fraud."

"In whom?"

"Well, naturally, in Lewis."

"But there was nothing of the sort!"

A trace of impatience became manifest in Aldous's manner.

"You needn't decide that. All you have to bear in mind are the facts, the occasions on which he thwarted you in the practice of your religion or intended to limit conjugal rights. Wasn't that his intention all along? Of course we'll try to spare you every

embarrassment, but you realize that a certain frankness will be necessary."

She had drawn away from him before, but she was standing now, staring at him as if she saw the intricate mind and its devious ways for the first time, or had just glimpsed the sensuous face beneath its mask of dispassionate control.

"And then you think they'd annul my marriage?"

"I can't be sure of it. But I think it's one way of approach. If that fails ——"

"How vile it all is!"

"You mustn't take it like this."

"Do you think I'd pretend—to anyone—that Lewis tried to keep me from practicing my religion? He didn't mind my being a Catholic. He objected to what it made me. Do you understand? What it seems to have made you—and Nellie Muldeen. He didn't keep me from going to Church. He took me there. It was only a clutter of images and absurdity to him, but he played absolutely fair. It was I who didn't. He has an honest mind. I haven't."

Aldous was a little paler. There was just a touch of moisture on his forehead.

"My dear child ——" he began.

She hid her face in tense, suffering hands. Aldous crossed the room softly and tried to take them. She moved as if he were a stain, and now he was frightened.

"Darling, this isn't like you—I've not made it clear ——"

Then he saw her face. It was not a face to argue with. The pliancy and gentleness were gone, as completely as if they had never been.

"Go away from here," she said. "Go out of this house—and out of every house and every place I'm ever in. And take your Church with you!"

Chapter Sixteen

THE CHURCH OF THE Madeleine, which is built like a Roman temple surrounded by many columns, stands in the square which bears its name and where streets and boulevards converge in a clutter, as if they could decide no direction. On the broad sidewalks of the boulevards scoundrelly-looking little fellows sell jumping-jacks that pull by invisible threads and dance. Girls vend tiny bouquets of fading flowers that pretend to be as fresh as their tin-foil wrappings, and on fine mornings the flower-market behind the church blooms like a sudden garden. Along the rue Royale the taxis honk all day and the shops and *confiseurs* lie in wait for foreigners with money to spend. A few good dressmakers and a great many copyists are within easy reach. So it is necessary for a great deal of traffic to pass the square, but hardly anyone ever looks up at the relief on the south façade which shows Christ judging the world. And all day long casual, unimportant Magdalens, on their way to hell, go by the windowless church, within which a sculptured Mary Magdalen above

the high altar, is borne to heaven by two ministering angels.

Marie wished the church were not there. It was always in her way. She had to pass it so often and she had once loved it so much, far better than the vastness of Notre-Dame, where so much of the picturesque history collected toll from tourists, better than the deliberately pinnacled Sacré-Cœur. She liked the wistful, interrupted story of the structure of the Madeleine, which Napoleon had meant to make his temple and the Catholic Church had gravely reclaimed.

It was the 2nd of November and All Souls' Day. Rain and chill threatened the gray afternoon. It was desolate weather, and very easy to imagine that greater desolation of purgatory through which souls wailed for prayers and salvation.

But Marie drew her thoughts from such imaginings. She did not pray these days. She would not, even for the soul of her mother, though for years that frightened spirit had been her tender care. She did not credit the existence of a purgatory any longer. That had gone, with the rest of her beliefs in the unseen. She believed now no further than she could see or touch or think. Her thoughts were as brittle as her days. She had given herself over to making up a life, and she was as busy over it as if she were packing a suitcase and must be very careful to leave no traveling essential out.

The beautiful and competent Marie Sanford, who had a lovely house in Paris, who had kissed her children an hour ago and left them in their charming nursery, was getting on very well. A little later they would go to the south of France and then, after a few more months, a new plan must be made, one with more permanence.

It was easier to sleep now. She could drive away the memories herself. When her uncle and aunt, whom she suspected had been apprised by Aldous, though indirectly, of her presence in Paris, had come to seek her out, it had not been hard to meet them and to tell them everything by telling them nothing. They were proud of her establishment, delighted with her children, and acquaintances and activity began to gather around her.

It was easy now to talk to a lawyer about getting a divorce. It had been easiest of all to deny herself to Aldous Marvin. He had become, with all the subtlety out of his sails, only a greedy, thwarted man, capable of watching for her on the corner, of sending her endless letters and telegrams, of trying to trap her into explanation and argument. But Marie had explained nothing to him. There was nothing to tell except that he had been a screen between her and reality and she no longer needed one.

I can manage anything that I must, she thought, and often wondered about the way her father had felt when he had left everything he had ever known

and gone West of Buffalo. In a curious way, it seemed as if she were doing, in the midst of all the sophistications in the world, what he had been doing in that barren, frontier country.

So it was unfortunate that her taxi should have been stalled in front of the Madeleine. Souls in purgatory were only superstitions, on the 2nd of November or on the 3rd. So she told herself. When people stopped living, they died and that was the end of it. In the meantime they married and unmarried and suffered and managed their own lives. That was the actuality.

But, sitting in the car before that flight of gray steps, a desire to go into the church became irresistible. To make wishes, Lewis would say, she thought, derisively. Or is it that I'm afraid to? Perhaps I had better do it, to show myself what little effect the place has on me now.

She leaned forward and said to the driver, "I shall get out here."

He took his fare, opened the door indifferently with a backward twist of a bony arm, and she was on the steps of the Church of the Madeleine, mounting them, approaching the great bronze doors.

There are no windows in the Madeleine. Marie had always loved that. It was like a great confessional. She liked the holding of its devotions and secrets close, the vague outlines of the Magdalen and the supporting angels. Moving down the aisle, she

went into one of the front sections and sat down in a little rush-backed chair. She was firm with herself. There was no need of kneeling. Never again would she hoodwink herself, or allow her children to be hoodwinked as she had been. It was a spectacle, that was all.

Little red lights burned before the side altars—wishes and sacrifices and hopes alight, she thought, all very fitting in a temple. The usual old people who are in every Catholic Church in the world were muttering rosaries—because they are told to, she thought, because they are afraid not to.

There was no transition, no orderly movement of her mind, no procession of ideas decorously allowing precedence to one another. There was no climax of reason or argument. Marie did not know whether it was the sight of the patient, ignorant old face coming in peace down the aisle, or the slight rustle of a priest's robe as he crossed the altar to arrange something and bent his knee in simple surety before it, or the attitude of the Magdalen. But suddenly she was on her knees. That was where she had to be. Why, it's true, she thought. I do believe, not because they tell me to but because it will always be true to me. It's not fear. It's my choice. It's my destiny.

Conviction of the supernatural came to her, gracefully, splendidly. She was sure. She felt her angel, no longer as winged guard, but as her own mind's

contact with eternity. This is my Church, she thought. Why have I let them drive me away from it? Why have I let them frighten and shame me away—Aldous, who was a false interpreter, Nellie, the Sanfords, Charlotte. This is a true Church and I believe in it.

The great body of belief, the faith of the world, the mysticism which had walked the centuries, rushed to her comfort. It wasn't wrong. It couldn't be. Even if it did not belong to everyone, even if it was unintelligible to so many, it was neither wrong nor corruptible. It sifted all evil and all chaff through it.

She thought that it was not Aldous's Church from which she had revolted, nor Nellie Muldeen's Church, which had made her ashamed, nor even her own. It was religion, a pure element which neither cruelty nor wickedness nor clumsiness nor the laying on of soiled hands could defile. It occurred to her that perhaps Lewis had dimly felt that. He had so hated to see anything cheap in her faith.

She saw that she had been a little, noisy thing, clattering her tiny troubles in the great silence of eternity, measuring her pain of a few years against the endless stretch of immortality. If it was like this, what did it matter whether she was happy or not? Whether she had twelve children or two? She had only part of her life to dispose of. Most of it went on beyond—before. Always she had been told that,

but for the first time the belief became hers. She took it to her mind at last.

She thought of Lewis, and everything in their relationship seemed simple and clear. I must go back to him, she decided. He'll be better off with me now. And I'm his wife. Charlotte couldn't be that, not as I have been.

When she went out the rain was washing down the columns. She felt as if it washed her, too. Walking through the emptying streets, she remembered that years ago in a Paris twilight she had come upon herself as a person. It was like that now. Only then she had found the physical self and this time it was the spiritual one. She would give neither of them up. She knew that now she would possess the faith of her mother with the clear determination of her father. It was mixed marriage working out its strange destiny in her in a church in Paris where no one would ever know she had knelt.

Chapter Seventeen

THE ELECTION RETURNS were coming by radio into the old Sanford house in St. Anthony. Charlotte Fairbanks, who had a small table and some scribbled pads of paper in front of her, had stopped writing on them and was leaning idly on her elbow. Deborah was smoking and half listening to the monotonous figures. Suddenly she got up.

"Want to hear more of this?"

Charlotte shook her head.

"No. The statistics of witch-burning leave me a little cold. We know now how it's coming out," she said.

Deborah pressed the switch and the silence in the room was like darkness for a minute.

"What time is it?" asked Charlotte.

"Half past twelve. It didn't take very long, did it? But there's no possible doubt. Somehow it leaves me a little sickened."

"All over the country people are feeling like that, I imagine. There's something excessive and exaggerated about this, no matter how you look at it.

I don't believe the air will clear at once. I wonder how Lewis is coming out."

"I'll put a call in for him again," said Deborah. "He must know more now than he did two hours ago. I wish he hadn't been so stubborn about our not coming up to Carmine tonight."

"Well, there was nothing we could do," answered Charlotte very levelly.

"I suppose not. He might have come down himself, if he hadn't preferred to wait for the vote there."

"It's his district. If they elect him that's where he should get the news. And probably he's better alone."

"I don't know that he is. I think he's better with people. With you, Charlotte. You help him a lot."

"Yes, I'm good office help," said Charlotte.

"That's not fair. You know he's fond of you."

"In a nice way," answered Charlotte with just enough satirical emphasis.

"You have to give him time."

"Time for what?"

"To get over Marie. To take his compensations."

"He's not going to get over her," said Charlotte, "and if you mean me by a compensation, choose your words more carefully. I don't like that one."

She was very deliberately not allowing the talk to get too serious.

Deborah laughed and then grew sober again.

"He's been tragically unhappy. But that's going to pass. He isn't always going to be suffering over her."

"Why not?"

"Because feelings as intense as that don't last. They're perishable. They slip from you," said Deborah, "when a person's gone. The life goes out of them as it does out of people."

"But she's not gone. She's only distant."

"She will be gone. Oh, I know the way he feels now. I spoke to him frankly once about a divorce. I wanted to open up that festering silence he's kept the thing in. And he rapped out at me that as far as he was concerned his marriage was indissoluble. He meant, I think, that it had gone too deep, that he couldn't free himself emotionally or conceive of marriage with anyone else. But he told me then what Marie's going to do. She's going to try to get an annulment. It's rather hideous isn't it? Like trying to make your children illegitimate, though I believe that isn't involved. That was the only time he ever talked about it at all."

"He's never talked to me."

"He will. One of these days. You should have had him in the first place, Charlotte. That's the pity of it. Your minds do fit beautifully."

"Minds—what use are they?" murmured Charlotte contemptuously.

"I should think it would be clear that they're of use when you look at what's happened to Lewis. He tried to live with a mind that wasn't free and it didn't work. I do hope that you and he pull something out of it now."

"No," said Charlotte, with a touch of violence. "No—not now."

"How can you be so sure?"

Charlotte's face was like her voice, harsh and harassed by the necessity of truth.

"I'll tell you why, if you must know. And then leave me alone about it. Because I'd have had him by now if there were any chance. He'd have turned to me when she left. Don't you see that? Instead we've been together day after day and I've been useless to him. I was more to him before Marie went away, before he sealed up his feelings. Since then I've been a companion and I've found a few votes for him. I've dusted the surfaces but I've not given him any comfort. It's not that I haven't tried. I think even he has tried. He's fond of me. He makes the affectionate gestures now and then. But nothing real happens between us. Do you think I want what I might get years from now? When every emotion in him is wrung dry or lifeless, as you think will happen? You wouldn't have that. Nor will I. Not even the old maid wants that!"

Deborah was silenced. She did not even dare to pity. She picked up the nearest thread of action and

only paused on her way to the telephone to lay her hand on Charlotte's tense shoulder.

"I'm sorry."

Then she called the long distance operator and gave her a number in Carmine.

"It may take a few minutes to get it through," she said, coming back to where Charlotte sat. "By the way, I suppose you know Martin Jeffrey's dead."

"Yes, I saw it in tonight's paper. If Lewis is beaten, Jeffrey will never have the satisfaction of knowing it. That's one comfort. It's been lucky that he's been in the hospital these last weeks. His machine rather needed him and that helped us."

The telephone rang and Deborah hurried to it.

"Hello, Lewis, how's it coming? It is? That's wonderful! Wait a minute. Give me the figures again. That makes it certain doesn't it? It's a tremendous personal victory. You ought to be awfully proud of yourself. When are you coming down to celebrate? Not this week? But the children and I will be gone then. We must leave for California on Saturday for mother's getting impatient. The house will be open, of course. Yes, I've made all arrangements in case you want to stay here any time." Her voice suddenly changed. "Oh, I didn't know that. When did you hear?"

"Is he elected?" interrupted Charlotte, who was listening eagerly.

"Wait, Lewis," said Deborah, "Charlotte's right here. She's the first one who really ought to get the news. I'll let you speak to her."

Charlotte turned from the telephone after a few minutes' political talk with a question in her eyes.

"Funny. He doesn't seem much interested, now that it's over. And it's a much more important victory than it looks on the face of it. It means the break-up of the old political rule up there. It's a big chance for Lewis. He doesn't seem to care tonight. But I suppose he's tired."

"He's just had a cable that Marie is on her way home," said Deborah as casually as might be. "It's a queer night, isn't it? Full of crazy climaxes."

There was just one thing that Lewis knew could make him suffer more than the separation between him and his wife; and that was to see her again. Any involuntary thought of her made every fiber of his imagination do cruel penance for her loss. But worse than that, it exposed the irresolution in his mind, drove him again to the unfinished argument as to whether the failure had been his own or inherent in the circumstances of his marriage. He could find no solution nor could he leave the problem alone. For it came at a time when, as Charlotte had prophesied on the evening of her dinner, the discussion of Catholicism had reached the marketplace. The harsh and noisy cries of prejudice, the whispers of

suspicion, the fanatical arguments and alliances seemed like hideous caricatures which were ever so faintly derived from thoughts of his own, from attitudes he had known himself to take.

In spite of his intense preoccupation, his thoughts had found no rest or conclusion. He was not ready to see Marie. The very excitement in his nerves, which seemed to contemplate her presence as his mind would not, made him dread the thought of a meeting with her. And her cable had told him nothing of what to expect from her, only that she was sailing for home with the children and when they would reach St. Anthony. It seemed exceedingly soon. Against the delight of seeing her, the emotional danger of her closeness, he knew that he must gather and store resistance. What was bringing her back he could not tell. It might be some message Martin Jeffrey had sent her. It might be duty or even desire. But Lewis knew that there must be no more compromises for the sake of an hour's or a month's or a year's indulgence of love. That sort of thing bred only insult in the end. If his love for her had ever been anything more than a passion this would be the hour of proof. And so he waited through long days that were also short until at length he stood one evening in the train shed at St. Anthony's station and saw her at last.

The cool intellectual in him took charge of their meeting, guided every tone of it, even as he laughed

over the children's joys and their few months' growth. There was plenty to be said that was of no consequence at all, about her voyage, about the election. He felt during those first few hours as if he were talking before an audience, as if everything he said had been prepared in advance. He was glad, in a fleeting thought, that her clothes were unfamiliar. They changed her a little, drew her out of his memories, made her a traveler, and one who must have excited much admiration and comment in her soft thin fur suit of caramel brown. But he wished she had not kissed him. He must remember not to think of that, when he went away tonight.

That was what he meant to do, of course. He had made plans to take her and the children to his mother's house, which was empty now except for servants and that was evidently what she had taken for granted. She was quite at home there now and the children were soon comfortable and in bed. Marie took off her hat and jacket. Her hair was smooth and her blouse was of soft white satin.

Lewis said, "You're looking very well, Marie."

"Am I? You're not. Was the campaign so hard?"

"Damnable. Not for me especially. But an ugly business all around."

That subject meant treacherous ground and they were alone now. Better not drag it out, he thought. We can talk better in daylight.

"Well, goodnight. It's good to see you."

He went to the hall and as he picked up his hat and coat he knew that she had followed him.

"Where are you going?"

"To the club. I moved over there today. Be sure to call me if you want anything."

"Why do you go there?"

"Well—why not? Isn't it simpler and better? We don't want to complicate anything later on. Any action we may want to take."

"There's nothing to complicate."

He could not go quite yet. It was like running away. He put down the things he was holding and came toward her. There was a long, curving bench which fitted the back of the hall and she sat down on that. He felt as she looked up at him that she was curiously fearless tonight.

"What brought you back, Marie?" he asked.

"I thought it was the right thing to do."

Whatever he had been hoping for, it was not that simple statement of rectitude. Driven by conscience as usual, he thought. Sent by her confessor, perhaps.

"Right," he said, as if he held the word critically at arm's length, "I'm not at all sure that it was."

"I had to come back to you, Lewis."

"You mean that you want us to begin to live together again?" he asked coldly. That was the only way it could be said.

"To go on living together," she corrected him.

"But I thought you were all set for an annulment. Or couldn't you get one?"

"I didn't try."

"Why not?"

"I had no right to one. The things Aldous suggested were dishonest."

"Well, the way we lived before you left wasn't particularly honest."

"No. But that's not the way we need to live now."

"You mean that you have a new idea?" he asked. "Or perhaps an ingenious confessor has found a loophole for you?"

She flushed and it occurred to him with amazement that one of the things that eased the terrible pain of love was to hurt the person one loved. Counter pain—that was it.

"I can't talk about it very well. I just know what's right."

"Did you learn from Aldous?"

"You're pretty cruel tonight, Lewis."

He made no answer.

"Aldous," said Marie, "was vile. He is a bad man and a worse Catholic. He did no more than kiss the very outside of me. He had nothing of yours, nor of mine. I've washed his touch off. I never wanted it. It was just that I was trying to forget you and Charlotte."

"Suppose," answered Lewis, and was not sure why

he said it, "that I told you I am in love with Charlotte."

"Are you?"

"Would you still want us to live together—you and I?"

He had hurt her. That showed in her whitening face. But her answer was steady enough.

"Yes. I think our marriage is more important than what you may feel for Charlotte. It's a pity if you love her. Still, I'm your wife."

"In a measure."

"Completely," she said quietly.

"Oh, don't talk like that. You know it's not true. You haven't thrown over your Church, have you?"

"I have not."

"Then we both know better, don't we?"

"Listen," said Marie, "I can't talk to you as Charlotte does. Or as your sister does. I'm not clever. I shall hate it if you love Charlotte or even if you've lived with her. But even that doesn't make a tremendous difference. I can't explain what's happened to me. I just know what things are important. I knew what I was doing when I came back. I knew you might hate me. But even that couldn't stop me. Or keep me away."

Lewis was more gentle now. But he looked away as he spoke.

"It's ridiculous to pretend I'm not in love with you, Marie. The very sight of you tears me to pieces,

opens up everything. But what can I do about it? I won't drag you back into those same old problems—they'd end by destroying us both. You'd hate me for making you cheat your Church."

"You couldn't make me cheat it now."

"I said once that I wouldn't interfere with it. And though I know I failed, I tried not to."

"I know you did. It was my fault. It's queer, Lewis, but I think I feel about the Church now as you wanted me to feel about it. I believe in it now. Not just because I was taught to but because I'm convinced of it. I'm not afraid any more. It makes so much difference."

It was not only the words that she spoke but the curious clarity in her voice that astonished him. He had never seen that fine touch of resoluteness in her before.

"What has happened to you?"

"Ah—you don't believe in miracles. How can I tell you?"

"But how can I be confident of making you happy?"

"I'm not so greedy for happiness. I want you, Lewis. I want love—and happiness if it comes along. You, anyway."

"There's the old impasse about having children," he warned her.

But she was ready for that.

"Lewis—do you remember that you said if I

wanted a dozen children with my head up that would be what you wanted too?"

"I remember saying it—and when I said it."

"Well, my head is up," she said quietly.

"I believe it is."

"Shall we go home tomorrow?"

"Do you want to go because you think it's right or because you love me?"

"Both reasons."

He looked down at her and all at once the struggle was over.

"Oh my lovely one," he whispered to her, close and secret in his arms, "make me believe again that you belong to me."

Chapter Eighteen

FATHER MICHAEL CARROLL was walking along the road between the church and his house. It was very cold and he hurried, thinking of many things. The boy must be told to get the church warmer for the Advent service tonight or the next one would be poorly attended. There were some families whom he would like to see get a little charity on Christmas next week. They were undeserving, perhaps, as the social worker said, but still pitiable. He wondered where he could get the money. His thoughts strayed to the decoration of the altar for Christmas. The woman who was in charge of that had been taken sick, and some one must be asked to take her place.

A car stopped behind him.

"Can I give you a lift, Father?" asked Lewis Sanford.

"Thank you. It would help me very much. I didn't know you were back."

"We just came up for Christmas—to show the children what winter is really like."

"They'll find out here."

"And I wanted to get in touch with my district."

"I hear you're doing fine work down there. You'll be making a name for yourself."

"It's not so much," said Lewis. "It will take years. I haven't so many hopes as I had before I was elected. But I know what I'm going to do when I get a chance. I'm laying for it."

The priest chuckled. "That's the main thing. And how is your dear wife?"

"She's very well."

"Ask her to come to see me."

"She'll be sure to."

They drove along, and Lewis wondered if Father Carroll was thinking of that day in October of last year when he had been driven by his own tortured mind to visit the priest. He had been shy about that visit ever since. He had poured out his resentments against the discipline of Catholicism, its superstitions, its interferences, its lack of effort to make its people think. He had been very bitter and the priest had been patient, though he had not yielded a point. Lewis could remember that Father Carroll had said again that marriage was indissoluble and his own sharp answer, "Not for the very rich Catholic! It's I for whom it's truly indissoluble—not my wife!"

He would have been surprised if he had known that the priest was really thinking of what two boys he could rely on to serve Mass in the morning if the weather dropped to thirty below as was threatened.

Tony Lepp, perhaps. They reached the priest's house and Father Carroll said, "Won't you come in and get warm?"

Lewis hesitated. "For a few minutes, if I'm not keeping you from anything. There are some things I've wanted to say to you for some time and I can't detain you in this cold."

It was none too warm in the priest's house. It never was. They made the most of a small fire of cannel coal in the sitting-room.

"Things going well with you?" asked the priest.

"Better than I had any right to hope. I'd like to make a little present to you or your church this Christmas."

"It's not necessary, my boy. Your good wife does enough."

"This is my gift," said Lewis. "I've a special reason for gratitude. Do you remember when I was so disturbed a year ago, Father Carroll, and came to you?"

The priest nodded sympathetically. He did not remember exactly what had been said, but he knew there had been great domestic difficulty. It had troubled him. Marie Sanford had gone to Europe and there had been a stir, a question of whether she had gone for good. But she had come back, led by grace.

"Those things have cleared up," said Lewis. "Of course I can see now what a tangle the whole situa-

tion was and how that rotten campaign made things worse."

"There's still bitterness about that."

"Yes. Jeffrey died just in time. He didn't clear himself, but at least he never knew he was found out."

"You thought very badly of him, didn't you?"

"I couldn't have thought worse."

"Well let's hope his sins are forgiven."

"I can't hope to that extent. If there is such a thing as punishment, I hope he's getting his, good and plenty."

"You shouldn't cherish resentment."

"As long as I come upon his trail, I shall. But that wasn't what I wanted to say. At that time I talked to you I couldn't see things clearly. I don't think I said them fairly. I felt, I know, that her religion had spoiled Marie."

The priest only smiled.

"It hadn't. When she came back to me, after those months in Europe, she was different. She was not less, but more a Catholic, if you know what I mean. But she was thinking for herself. That's made it possible for us to go on. Of course I don't agree, I never shall agree with the doctrines of your Church, or stop taking issue with the discipline. To me it isn't normal. The restrictions aren't based on the best interests of people. But Marie thinks they are. She knows what she's about now and so we're on equal

ground. You see, Father, what I mean is that she's become a conscious Catholic."

Father Carroll said, "She's a good child."

It checked Lewis. He looked at the priest almost in astonishment, and said, "This talk of mine doesn't mean anything to you, does it?"

"Of course it does, my son!"

"But to you it's all utterly simple."

Father Carroll sighed. In the red glow of the coal fire Lewis could see that his hair was streaked with gray.

"The problems of the mind are seldom simple," he said. "They can be troubling and devious. But they are not very important. The finite mind can go only a little way before it must lean upon the decisions and dictations of its Creator and the great body of wisdom which has been assembled in His Church. Only a little way," he repeated after a moment, as if it both tired and rested him to think of it.

Lewis rose. His own voice had relaxed. "I mustn't keep you, Father. But I'm sending a gift which is between you and me. Use it where it will help most, will you? It's a private memorial."

"Nothing could be more gratifying or generous. God bless you, my son."

Lewis felt as if that blessing sat oddly upon him as he went away. It touched him, and yet he wanted to laugh about it. He thought of what an amazing institution the Catholic Church was. His children

would be brought up to believe in it. He wondered if they'd stay believers when they grew up. It would be interesting to see, and he hoped that he would be there to help them if they felt as he did, that the tenets and dogmas of Catholicism could not be mentally accepted or believed.

Carmine, deep in snow, looked like a gentle, sparkling village tonight. His plans for the country began to absorb him. It was going to be very different now, with Jeffrey dead and Tom Collins out of the picture. There was room to move, and little by little the administration of Marie's fortune was going to pass into his hands. It would be inevitable. That was a responsibility he had to accept for the sake of his children. Their fortune must not be synonymous, as Marie's had been, with devious and twisted dealings. With Jeffrey's death certain ambiguities in Lewis's own position had soon ceased to exist. But it wasn't that which was making it possible for them now. It wasn't that Charlotte had slipped into her old groove of caustic friend. He thought of something Deborah had said about Marie recently. Deborah didn't like Marie. She never would, and it was becoming more clear. There was a growing trace of bigotry there. But she was just. She had said, "Marie's becoming a strong person, Lewis. She looks just the same, but she isn't."

Lewis knew. He was going back to her now. It was their first night of the Christmas holidays in

the Carmine house and there would be all the excitement of the children to watch. Later on, when the house was quiet, it would be joy to be alone there with Marie. How deeply a wife she was and how generous she could be.

It was ridiculous to wish for more. There was no reason for that sense of barrier he still had.

He passed the little church. There was a light in it streaming in color through the stained-glass windows. It was only a country church, but Lewis knew what it was. It was the Madeleine and St. Peter's—it was all of them. Looking at it, he thought, you win because you make no concessions. You know that is your strength and your security. You won't take less than you ask. I have Marie. But you have her, too.

Just then he saw her. She must have walked out to get a breath of the cold winter air. He saw her going up the church steps and wondered what she was thinking, and if beyond their happiness there were not things in her mind at which he could not guess.

He was right. For as Marie went into a church, she always made a little Act of Faith.

THE END